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CHARLES GOUNOD

HIS LIFE AND HIS WORKS.

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CHARLES GOUNOD

HIS LIFE AND HIS WORKS

BY

MARIE ANNE DE BOVET

WITH PORTRAIT AND FACSIMILES

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TO THE READER.

CARLYLE, in his exposition of Hero Worship, which he elevated into the Religion of Humanity, declares that an epoch is to be judged by its acceptance of its great men, but he lays down no rule for the manifestations of the *cultus* of the Hero. If passionate interest in the words and deeds of the great, ardent curiosity concerning their personal peculiarities, their private lives and character, constitute such a religion, the present generation may assuredly claim to be devout, although indifference is habitually charged upon contemporaries. Carlyle, however, understood in a different sense the honour rendered to the elect of God, the messengers of Heaven, the inspired of Nature, of whom Odin was the first and he the latest. (He does not speak of himself, it is true, but we know what he means.) He held that his own epoch failed towards its heroes, and he satirizes its tendency to regard them as objects of curiosity and entertainment, when he writes of Burns becoming the lion of Edinburgh society, and offering his arm to duchesses; "the most

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precious gift that heaven can give to earth, a man of genius as we call it, the soul of a man actually sent down from the skies with a God's message to us—this we waste away as an idle artificial firework, sent to amuse for a while, and sink into ashes, ruins, and ineffectuality."

Truly, the incense which modern society offers its great men is due partly to the love of gossip, which has always been a feature of decadence, and partly to the snobbery of the crowd. It is easy to learn, more or less authentically, details of the private life of a celebrity, far easier than to estimate his genius aright. One's vanity is flattered by making the public believe that one is intimate with a man of genius, and the public like to know that the privileged mortal is even such as themselves.

The general adoration of the great, so amusingly and justly exposed by Thackeray, would be pathetic, were it not ridiculous, when its object is really worthy of the worship of mankind. But it is generally fatal to its objects, injuring them in the estimation of sensible people, who laugh at these idiotic manifestations, and are tempted, in a spirit of reaction, to make the innocent recipient responsible for their absurdity.

The *ideas* of a great man are the property of the public, his personality remains his own, and his private life none have a right to invade.

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The reader of these pages will look in vain for revelations of the latter kind. It is the artistic life of Charles Gounod solely which I propose to narrate; and if, as the biography proceeds, I have to allude to the character of the man whose record it is, it will be because the genius of an artist is a part of his soul, and the study of the one imperatively leads to an incursion into the domain of the other.

While I claim for this work the attention and indulgence of the British public, I ask permission to state its intention. The illustrious French composer enjoys the privilege of consciously achieving immortality. It is not forbidden to erect literary monuments to the living, although statues may be withheld. Æsthetic studies of Gounod's works, and biographical notices of him are numerous. But, even as contemporary history is the least known, the life of a man is generally known imperfectly until the grave has closed upon him; and for the same reason, the only documents which could thoroughly enlighten the historian and the biographer have not yet become public property. Besides, critical judgments, necessarily partial and incomplete, are merely the expression of personal opinions, more or less competent, influenced by schools, systems, and doctrines, contradicting each other, interesting to consult, no doubt, but requiring to be weighed and balanced; these can never give a bird's-eye

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view of the man's genius ; they can but indicate some special points of it.

The present work is neither a biography nor a criticism. A statue in a public place is the privilege of the dead ; the living have a right to their portraits in a national gallery. What I have endeavoured to produce, is a portrait of the artist and the man within the limits wherein one is inseparable from the other, without prejudice or partiality, with no other motive than truth. My intention is to place before such of his contemporaries as have not been brought in contact with Gounod, the living presentment of one who holds an unique place in the history of Art. If I can hope to succeed, it is because my hero's personality eclipses my own, because, in all I have to say, the reader may find a scrupulously faithful transcript of the ideas and feelings of the Maestro, a mirrored reproduction, so to speak, of his mind, his heart, and his soul. The peculiar facilities I have enjoyed for observing the close connection between his work and his temperament, which would make it impossible to explain the former without the latter, are my credentials.

I preface my work with these personal remarks because I desire to gain the confidence of the reader by stating my claim to it.

THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

With the best will in the world to struggle against a pessimistic disposition, it is difficult not to acknowledge the inferiority of our own era to certain periods in the history of civilization. Setting aside the progress of corruption, the decadence of truth, and other lamentable signs of the times, Art alone suggests melancholy reflections. It is true that our century boasts of having produced a great number of men of talent. Never, it is said, has talent been so widely diffused as at the present time; the narrow way to the temple of Fame is more crowded than ever before, and those who fall in the crush are not always the least deserving or the weakest, for Fortune remains blindfolded, and grants her favours haphazard.

But how artificial is this efflorescence in reality, what penury is hidden under the golden mantle, what narrowness and poverty of thought are disguised by the outward forms with which we must needs rest satisfied!

A common error regards genius as talent carried to its supreme height; but genius and

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talent are widely different in their very essence. Talent is intelligence fructified by labour, dexterity of hand assisting the comprehensive faculties of the brain, imagination fertilized by communion with creative spirit. Genius is the creative spirit itself, the absolutely personal invention, the spontaneous expression of divine inspiration, the central fire at which all the flames that warm and enlighten humanity are kindled. The greater or lesser merit of work does not constitute the difference between genius and talent. Certain passages of the *Barbiere di Seviglia* or *Wilhelm Tell* might have been composed by the author of *Don Giovanni;* but it is from the pure source of Mozart's genius that Rossini, who was only a talented composer, drew the inspiration which dictated them. The illustrious Mozart was inspired by himself alone; from his own soul sprang those waters at which so many slaked their thirst. There is a whole world in this distinction.

If talent be prolific to-day, genius is undeniably rare. Is it not possible to be content with what exists? The artist of genius is a species of Messiah sent at intervals to raise the crumbling temple of Art; when his task is fulfilled, and he vanishes once more, is it not enough that he leaves behind him pious disciples who will continue his work? Perhaps, if the disciples are equal to the task, talent may reach a degree

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of elevation and amplitude that assumes the appearance of genius; in such hands the banner of the Ideal will be carried proudly aloft. After Bach, Beethoven and Mozart, it may safely be entrusted to Haydn, Mendelssohn and Schumann. But are the contemporary musicians, to whom we concede this same title of "men of talent," to be compared with these?

It was perhaps inevitable that the standard of art should be lowered in proportion to the expansion of its *cultus*. The artists of the past were such giants that only a few choice spirits were able to follow their footsteps in the empyrean; the artists of to-day are more accessible to the crowd, and it requires no eagle's eye to keep them in sight. Not only has a taste for the Arts become general among the public, but the creative faculty is divided among a greater number of individuals; if there exists only a limited amount in every definite period, its intensity must necessarily be diminished by a larger distribution. Inspiration thus scattered, dwindles. This form of demoralization may be deplored, but is probably the consequence of an impulse of humanity stronger than our will, and must be accepted without unavailing regrets.

Looking, on the contrary, at the Italian Renaissance, one observes the number of artists of genius of that epoch; their suppleness,

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fertility, power, and universality, and also, if not in all, at least in many instances, the serenity of their inspiration. But although such a wonderful abundance is not vouchsafed to every time and every land, the race of these marvellous artists is not extinct. In more sterile ages some will arise resplendent with the golden reflex of that glorious bygone day—painter, sculptor, architect, musician, or poet—all different apostles of the same religion of the Beautiful. Certain souls are like a generous soil in which is sown the germ of genius, which will be developed under various forms, determined by a particular moral conformation resulting from a particular physical conformation. Carlyle, to quote him once more, affirms that the exterior action of its surroundings decides the direction in which the flame of genius will be wafted. "The great man as he comes from the hand of Nature is ever the same. All are originally of one stuff, and only by the world's reception of them and the shapes they assume are they so immeasurably diverse." Carlyle, possibly, is right; at any rate, when he gives the same title, Heroes of Humanity—or in common parlance, great men—to demi-gods and poets, prophets and illustrious captains, philosophers and thinkers of every degree, he is certainly right, for these mortals have a divine spark that is common to them all.

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If Carlyle does not rank artists in this somewhat vague classification of the different aspects of genius, it is because in his austere eyes Art is a corrupting agent, too frequently clothed in a sensual shape; its love for the ideal does not hesitate to overstep the boundaries of respect. I should not wonder if Carlyle had but a slight leaning towards music. It is not unusual for very superior men to regard the more or less melodious combinations of sound as an irksome and intrusive noise, which absorbs general interest to their detriment. In a curious commentary on the performance of an opera, Carlyle certainly does describe music as "the speech of angels which brings us nearer to the Infinite, through which we look for a moment across the cloudy elements into the Eternal Sea of Light," but this lofty comparison applies only to the Psalms of Asaph and to the songs of Tyrteus. Lyrical drama excites his indignation against the frivolity of the times, and he exclaims in the accents of the Prophet Jeremiah: "If you ask me why heroes are not born now, why heroic actions are not accomplished to-day, I shall answer: because it is a world calculated to strangle all heroism". (Miscellaneous Essays, vol. vii).

This is "tall talk" *à propos* of *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*. It is not impossible, however, that the passionate love of the arts in general, and

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music in particular, only flourishes at periods of moral decadence, being at once the cause and effect of the relaxation in manners, the deterioration of minds, and the perversion of consciences. It is a fact that the present generation has concentrated all they still possess of ideal feeling in love for art, and that far from considering artistic faculties as of a secondary order, they exalt them above all others. Are they mistaken? Art is, when all is said, the most marvellous factor in the spiritual domain of man, for there is nothing more divine, nothing, I mean, which more directly participates in a divine essence which is above our understanding. *Art*—the feeling and the manipulation of the *Beautiful*—would then be loftier than *Virtue*, which is the knowledge and the practice of what is *Good*. Man is able to define the character of every virtue and to justify its necessity from a social point of view. It is indispensable to the order and security of every human community that the life and property of its members should be respected, the weak protected, charity practised, that promises should be sacred, and truth honoured. But who can define why the Beautiful is beautiful, why we have the intuitive sentiment that it is so? Who can say whence it comes, to what it leads? It is mysterious, intangible, divine! And music might almost be regarded as the first of arts, for it is the least tangible,

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the least definable of all. Let those who believe they have found a definition refrain from saying that Art is the cult of the Ideal—lest we should ask them to define the latter, a task which has defied the most subtle and persistent efforts of philosophers. Admitting that what passes our limited understanding is divine, art would be essentially divine, so far at least as we can obtain a glimpse of divinity here below.

The great artists born on the rich Italian soil in the sixteenth century presented their ideas on canvas, in bronze, marble or stone: musical expression was still in its infancy. Although a musician, Gounod is allied to these artists through his intellectual organization, as vast, noble, and serene as theirs, free from doubt, hesitation, or weakness. I do not mean to say that he is infallible; the perfect artist does not exist. What is the perfection of the Beautiful? Art takes as many shapes as there are artists. No one can be an artist who has not a special temperament, and to have that, necessarily implies excesses—which are blemishes. It is often said that there are a hundred modes of producing the ugly and only one of producing the beautiful; I think it is exactly the reverse. All that fails to awaken the ideal feeling is ugly—and there is no more to be said about it. Beauty, on the contrary, takes the most varied aspects. It is a Protean shape clothed in countless garbs and colours;

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no one has a right to say of any that it is the best, for the mingling of all these forms and hues is the ardent longing of the artist, the heavenly vision appearing to all, but which few are blessed enough to hold in even a fleeting embrace. An artistic form, so soon as it answers to a single one of the manifold aspects of the Ideal, is not to be discussed; the critic must be restricted to the effort to discover whether the supreme goal is reached, that is, whether the creator has produced the beautiful. If he has produced the ugly, no more need be said, for it is not art.

A work of art may therefore be variously beautiful, but it is always composed of two distinct elements; invention and execution. Some artists of indisputable genius are unable to invest their work with both qualities in the necessary proportion, so as to impart completeness, finish and perfection to it. Others possess the exquisite conformity of the brain that conceives and the hand that models, and this supreme quality gives to their work harmony and sincerity, apart from the artistic value of the original idea. This is what I mean by artistic serenity. I hasten to add that in making a distinction between the restful and the restless genius, I do not presume to place the latter on a lower level than the former. It is generally because artists have undertaken

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tasks beyond human strength that they have been defeated in their struggle with an ideal which they could not master.

Gounod will forgive me if, speaking of him, I mention two names which no doubt have already risen to the reader's lips. Raphael possessed artistic serenity because he limited his aspirations to the realization of the beautiful in terrestrial nature; Michel Angelo suffered a life-long pain because he attempted to embody the conceptions of a Titan.

Gounod is endowed in the highest degree with a perfect equilibrium of artistic faculties, and it is through this rare quality, and others which a deeper insight into his character will reveal, that he is linked to the great epoch of Italian Renaissance, when Michael Angelos were scarce and Raphaels abounded—I am now alluding only to temperament, of course. This trait of his genius, which he possesses in common with Mozart, would invest the study of the artist and his works with deep interest. An equally important feature is the considerable influence his genius has exercised on French musical art; not that Gounod is the head of a school, for a school implies a system, and the Master never had, or at least never thought of formulating, one. The Italian critic, P. Scudo, now no more, whose judgment, although re-formed on many points by the serious modifications of the doc-

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trines of musical æstheticism, are nevertheless still deeply interesting, has written the following just remarks: "True genius does not waste time in discussing the value of its work or in constructing systems; it seeks, doubts, and finds! He who talks and debates is on the wrong track, or else he is a nobody who stuns the public with his words because he has failed to please them with his accents."

This observation was suggested to the reviewer of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* by the writings of a young German composer, who was eventually to create an immense sensation. No one would dream nowadays of calling the Maestro of Bayreuth "a nobody;" to say that he took "the wrong track" might be more plausible. In any case, whatever be the value of his doctrines, Wagner would perhaps have done more wisely to convert us by practice rather than overwhelm us with theories. Why has he not acted on the precept of Goethe, so profound in its emphatic simplicity, "*Bilde, Künstler, rede nicht*" ("Paint, artist, do not talk")? *He* would have reaped the benefit of being less discussed, *we*, of being spared volumes of literature. A whole library bears the name of "Wagneriana," and yet I would willingly exchange it all for the one "Song of Spring" in the *Walküre*, just as the Serenade in his *Damnation de Faust* condones the literary verbosity of Berlioz. A fine piece of work is

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worth more than the best system, and the most valuable use a musician can make of his time is to dream, to love, to weep, to sing with his imagination and his heart, careless whether we learn by what means he creates, or how we may imitate him. Gounod's ambition soared no higher, and neither he nor the world have had any reason to regret this.

But, if he has not founded a doctrinal school, he has nevertheless been an innovator and a generator. Without preaching or professing, he has originated a Pleïades of artists, who more or less consciously proceed from him. To name one of the most eminent, M. Massenet is truly the spiritual son of Gounod, upon whose grace he has refined with infinite talent, and an individual and highly interesting effect. The consanguinity of the two musicians is evident, although no one listening to a composition of the author of *Marie Magdeleine* would be tempted to exclaim, "This is Gounod's." A proof of the individuality imported by the younger Maestro into his intellectual relationship with the elder one is afforded by the now current expression, "*Faire du Massenet.*" It is not, however, less certain, that had *Faust* and *Romeo* not existed, the agreeable compositions of M. Massenet would not have seen the day; he is no more a copyist than he is a creator.

To return to the difference between talent

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and genius, there is an unerring sign by which each may be recognized. When the artist suggests the comment, "over-handled," he is classified. All the talent awarded to him by this will not avail to lift him to the height of genius, for he is deficient in sincerity, which is the essential condition of the latter. M. Massenet's exquisite grace, his delicate sensibility, the subtle refinement of his harmonies, the lissom elegance of his style are above praise, as well as the consummate skill of his workmanship, but all this precisely proves my case.

His excessive dexterity would be gladly exchanged at times for a little more warmth and conviction, his feminine languor for some evidence of virile energy. It must always be supremely difficult for intellectual faculties to find their exact balance. Between the over-refinement of Massenet and the roughness of Berlioz there is a wide range. The human mind loves variety, and even imperfect expressions of the beautiful are welcome. To be cradled one hour by the tender harmonies of the "Virgin's Sleep," and thrilled the next by the wild accents of the "Course à l'Abîme" are pleasures so great that we are unwilling to relinquish either.

The "over-handling" so often asserted of Massenet, has never been said of Gounod, save in reference to certain pages of *Redemption;*

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this does not detract from his consummate skill in the practice of his art, and knowledge of all its processes, and even technical devices. He knows his business thoroughly, and in this lies the third element of interest presented by the study of his artistic genius. Only with him the work of his hand is unperceived, his execution is like a canvas which he embroiders until it is entirely covered with the flowers of his imagination. It is not its intricacy which constitutes the value of a work. It is often said of Mozart's "handling" that it is simple—yes, simple assuredly, like all that is great. Is it not the perfection of art to obtain the desired effect by simple means? In support of this argument, what can be more striking than the apparition of the Commander in *Don Giovanni?* Simplicity is not the reverse of science—far from it.

May I be allowed to insist on this point, because it has given rise to constant errors and misunderstandings? It is the fashion among those who discuss music without knowing much about it—and their name is legion—to exclaim with a dogmatic air: "Confound scientific music!" This sounds well, but means absolutely nothing; for it has never been possible to achieve anything that is good without being thoroughly conversant with one's business. All music is scientific, or it is not music

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—at least good music. If it has been listened to with a yawn, it is because it was not understood; this may be the fault of the hearer, because the composition is beyond his comprehension, but sometimes also it is the fault of the composer, who has failed to make himself intelligible. This is a frequent case, and far from having failed from excess of science, the artist's insufficient knowledge is generally the cause of his non-success; a misfortune that sometimes befell one of the greatest masters of the French school. Gluck, whom France claims as her own, has vainly tried to supplement the inefficiency of his musical education by literary refinement. The feebleness of his technique, the awkwardness of workmanship, the roughness of style, the weakness of inspiration, of which he was not always himself aware, were so many bonds in which his vigorous faculty of conception struggled, and they hampered the nobility and grandeur of his imagination, and his profound pathos, producing glaring inequality in his work. Equilibrium is the fundamental law of Beauty. There is no sleight of hand that can replace the intuition of feeling; but feeling is of no avail if it cannot be justly expressed; in a work of art form is inseparable from the idea—I may even add, and I shall return to this later, that form is superior to idea.

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Let, me however, not be misunderstood. It is not necessary, in order to write scientific music, that is good music—for in my opinion the terms are identical—to make the score bristle with strange harmonies, to crowd it with weird sounds, to seek contrasting rhythms, to accumulate startling effects and glaring colours, for that would be convulsive music, and serenity is one of the conditions of beauty. The science of the musician is apparent in the strength and delicacy of harmonic workmanship, in a happy selection of modulations, in his free and easy handling of the instruments, in his attention to detail, truth of colouring, and purity of style; in the equilibrium of the whole, in the close connection between all the component parts, failing which, as Lessing says, "Music is but a heap of sand incapable of retaining any impression." Science, thus understood, is the skeleton of a work of art; inspiration is its flesh and blood. Without it the work is fallacious and ephemeral, a plaster cast crumbling to pieces at a breath. These observations naturally apply chiefly to serious works, for there is a vast difference between writing a graceful song or an elegant instrumental piece, and constructing a symphony or an opera finale.

As a corroboration of this statement, I have only to refer to the Italian composers of the beginning of this century. Bellini's ignorance of

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the principles of musical science is well known. What remains of his works, albeit he possessed certain of the qualities that make a Maestro? Brilliant pieces of execution, such as the rondo in *I Puritani*, dear to the pupils of musical schools competing for a prize, and a few isolated inspirations of divine origin such as are found in *Norma*, but which do not rest on the solid basis that alone ensures immortality for works of art. The graces of Bellini retain but little attraction for our time.

So it is with Donizetti. Remarkable passages of his numerous productions have survived, but had he been a better contrapuntist, this facile melodist would not have written in six weeks his *Dom Sebastiano*, known by name only to the present generation, and would have left behind more pieces like the sextet of *Lucia*, which will perpetuate his memory. Moreover, the mould in which those agreeable composers cast their thoughts is broken. Before them Gluck, and later Spontini, their compatriot and contemporary, had adopted another, taken up by Rossini in *Wilhelm Tell*. The time is past when a musician was only required to fit hap-hazard into a given frame a certain quantity of elegant or pathetic, graceful or passionate numbers; he is nowadays expected to create a drama. In order to accomplish this task, he must have higher and sterner culture than was deemed sufficient to

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bring forth the charming but transient blossoms of a period of decadence in great art.

Verdi knows this well. When renouncing the easy creed of his youth, he bravely applied himself to more serious work, all his powers of conception, his fertility of invention, his exuberant "go," the ill-regulated excitement which occasionally carries away the audience and blinds it to reason, his dramatic and emotional instincts, were employed to supplement, so far as lay in his power, the defects of his early education, his ignorance of what may be styled the "chiaroscuro" of music. Even now, when he has mastered his third "manner," however remarkable the *Requiem* and *Aïda* may be, they show traces of the imperfections of past days; while these are even more apparent in *Otello*, because the attempt was farther beyond his reach of success.

Let us drop the cant about scientific music. I do not know what a learned musician is, but I know what the musician who knows music is, and that his works alone survive a fleeting and superficial popularity. When such a man possesses, in addition to his knowledge, the creative fire which inflames other minds, he is more than a musician of talent, his *rôle* is more noble, his range wider, his labour more fertile. An inspired artist and skilled workman, endowed in the highest degree with artistic serenity, the result

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of perfect equipoise between his faculties and his aspirations, Gounod ranks with those who have scaled the heights of Parnassus. Hence the study of his temperament and his work is not only seriously interesting, but it becomes a precious lesson. My desire to make this clearly apparent has caused me to dwell at length on merely preliminary considerations.

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Part I.

GOUNOD AT HOME.

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Ma chère Marie Anne

Vous me demandez lequel
je préfère de Faust
ou de Roméo ?
Faust est plus vieux ..
mais j'étais plus jeune.
Roméo est plus jeune,
mais j'étais plus vieux -
Maintenant choisissez
à vous

Ch. Gounod

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THE LIFE AND WORKS OF CHARLES GOUNOD.

CHAPTER I.

The Monceau quarter—Gounod's house—His family—His study—The Master at home.

ALTHOUGH current gossip and newspaper reports concerning the private life of illustrious men are regarded with well-deserved contempt by all refined intellects, nevertheless details are not insignificant when the life and character of a celebrity are matters of serious examination. All things in a human organization possess coherence—the physical, moral, and intellectual temperament. This is essentially true with regard to a sincere artist like Gounod, who writes under the dictation of his heart, with the assistance of technical knowledge acquired by constant labour, and the perfection of touch which only great experience gives, and who is absolutely devoid of affectation, of perfunctory refinement, of mannerism of any kind.

Besides this, the warmth and activity of

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life lend an irresistible attraction to a work of art. It is not always easy to conceive an ideal hero; the adventure we have witnessed, the monument we have seen, the picture we have gazed upon, take a far more forcible hold on our mind than any description can ever convey. If a name uttered before us does not evoke some well-known figure, our vagabond fancy creates a fictitious type, and endows it with qualities or defects that are equally unreal.

It is not difficult to know Gounod thoroughly. As he has said in his own picturesque language, "His soul looks out from a crystal mirror," and no one who sees him can doubt this. Like crystal his soul vibrates at the slightest touch, and the hand would be awkward indeed which could not call forth the quick response. All rich natures are communicative. Reticence is a form of timidity—which is a weakness—or of dissimulation—which is a vice. Gounod can be accused of neither. For him it is a necessity to be expansive, and he yields to this instinct all the more readily that he is conscious of his authority over all minds, and his charm for all hearts. He knows that the gifts he so generously bestows will be gratefully received, and he has often applied the sacred words: "He who has loved his life shall lose it: he who has given it shall find it again." Few men have been so lavish of theirs as Charles Gounod.

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Let us seek Gounod at home. He is so hospitable that we may feel assured of a hearty welcome.

The Maestro's house is situated in that broad new portion of North-Western Paris extending over the old site of the Plain of Monceaux. Forty years ago, the only buildings visible were dairy farms visited by delicate women for the sake of the warm new milk, or by consumptive patients ordered to sleep in the cow-sheds. Beyond lay market-gardens, factories, works, and yards; this locality, half-country, half-suburb, fringed the city that was beginning to be stifled within its walls, and was outgrowing its ancient boundaries on all sides.

The finest mansions of Paris have since been erected on that spot; broad avenues lined with trees stretch their leafy boughs between the houses; wide, sunny, and peaceful streets, quiet squares, spacious boulevards, intersect them; and here and there, in sudden contrast, we find some forgotten vestige of the old Faubourg, a gasometer, a timber-yard, a plot of barren ground, a block of mean and overcrowded houses. Ere long, however, the last trace of the former inhabitants will have totally disappeared, driven back beyond the fortifications by the irresistible pressure of an ever-increasing stream of Parisians setting in that direction, chiefly artists and literary men in quest of space, light, and air, the

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great fertilizing forces alike of the brain and the soil.

Painters are already numerous in this district. To own a house, large or small, in the Avenue de Villiers, the promised land of the brethren of the brush, is the dream that gilds the poverty of all the unrecognized Raphaels perched on the heights of Montmartre, who live on crusts until fame comes to them. They look forward hopefully to the day when they shall join Meissonier, Gérôme, Jacquet, Detaille, Dubuffe, and many others, whose name is their beacon and the honour of their craft, in the new El Dorado.

Like all quarters where the commercial movement is lacking, this portion of Paris is somewhat solitary, but it derives a particular charm and interest from the variety of its architecture, due to the more or less artistic tastes of the owners. The classical French houses, with their five storeys, Mansard roofs, white stone frontages, tall *porte-cochères*, and wrought-iron balconies, are divided by quaint, remarkable constructions in which all the styles are combined; where Italian Renaissance elbows the Flamboyant Gothic, where Flemish turrets face Greek pediments, and lace-like Arabic façades fraternize with heavy Egyptian pillars, not to mention the composite constructions in which the delirious imagination of the designer has run riot, contemptuous of the accepted rules of beauty.

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The Place Malesherbes, in the upper portion of the boulevard of the same name, where it is intersected by the Avenue de Villiers, is the largest and finest in the district; it is planted with chestnut-trees, made gay with lawns and flowers and adorned with the statue of Alexander Dumas *père*, the last work of Gustave Doré. It is well known that the latter lamented artist was far less appreciated as a painter in France than in England, and that towards the end of his life he devoted himself to sculpture, hoping to achieve in the higher ranks of art a reputation that would eclipse his fame as a draughtsman.

The house occupied by Dumas *fils* lies not far from his father's monument. One side of the square is almost entirely taken up by a reduced copy of the Castle of Blois, the costly whim of a wealthy sugar-refiner, who probably fancies he pays a defiant homage to democracy in his person by his lying in the cradle of the Valois. Opposite, but occupying far less space—it is not given to all to make sugar—at the angle of the boulevard and of a small street, runs the chaste and elegant Renaissance frontage of a three-storey building. It is Gounod's house, built in 1879 by his brother-in-law, M. Pigny, a clever architect, now deceased. The Maestro has reserved the second floor for himself, his sister-in-law lives on the first, overhead dwells his son. M. Jean Gounod married

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the daughter of the decorative painter Gallard, and they have had two sons: Pierre, a smart boy of eight, whose resemblance to his grandfather is striking in so young a child; and Jean, who died last year.

Gounod's daughter, married in 1886 to Baron Pierre de Lassus, occupies the ground-floor; her baby-boy is christened after the Maestro. In this patriarchal abode he lives seven or eight months of the year. With the sunny June days the whole family flits to St. Cloud, where Madame Gounod has a country house, inherited from her father, the pianist Zimmermann; but Gounod himself frequently breaks his *villeggiatura* by trips, excursions, or visits to friends who eagerly claim his presence. The first November frosts invariably find him settled again in Paris.

The interior of this charming residence does not belie the promise of the exterior. The staircase, of massive carved wood in the style of Henri II., has been decorated in exquisite taste by Guillaume Dubuffe the younger, a nephew of Gounod, with graceful female silhouettes in white and pale gold on a cerulean blue ground; these represent the Muses, and characters in the Maestro's operas, Marguerite at her spinning-wheel, Juliet leaning on her balcony, St. Cecilia in ecstatic reverie, Sappho playing on her lyre; a few bars of music, written in gold under each figure, record some characteristic melody of the

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composition of which these are the heroines. Medallions placed round the cornice bear the great names of Raphael and Mozart, Beethoven and Michael Angelo, Palestrina and Johann Sebastian Bach, Jean Goujon and Philibert Delorme, Rubens and Rembrandt, Homer and Dante, Shakespeare and Cervantes, Corneille and Molière.

On the landings of this splendid staircase no walls or heavy doors are to be seen; on all sides the partitions are mere loggie, or low balconies; railings and gratings in delicately wrought iron allow the light and air to penetrate freely into the rooms. On the first floor, a winter garden with flowers and palms, lends a contrasting brilliancy to the sombre hues of the carved oak, and the rich, dark colours of the Eastern carpets covering the stairs. But the chief attraction of the house lies higher still. Following a long, well-lit gallery, adorned with flowers and valuable artistic furniture, leading to Gounod's private apartments, the eye wanders freely over rooms which convey the impression of ideal refinement rather than wealth; according to the now prevailing fashion, the doors are generally left open, or replaced by curtained draperies.

Gounod's study has a strongly marked artistic atmosphere. It is an immense apartment, rising to the height of two floors, lit by a broad window with light stained glass; it is panelled

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with oak, and vaulted like a church. And is it not the sanctuary of Art? At the further extremity, on a platform reached by several low steps, stands a large organ by Cavaillé Coll; the bellows are worked by a hydraulic machine in the basement. A medallion representing a head of Christ, is placed in the centre of the instrument. The writing-table under the stained-glass window is one of those composite ones used by musicians, a movable keyboard sliding backwards and forwards under the desk at will. The Renaissance mantelpiece in wood, richly carved in high reliefs representing scenes of the Passion, is decorated with a bronze medallion of Joan of Arc and massive iron ornaments. In the centre of the room is a large grand-piano by Pleyel. One side is filled with bookcases—works on theology and philosophy occupying a conspicuous place—and with musical scores; among these, the collection of ancient ones, inherited by Gounod from his father-in-law, is extremely valuable.

Among the numerous objects of art, the most remarkable are two reduced copies of the statues on the Medici mausoleum, by Michael Angelo, a smaller one of his *Moses*, a fine bust of Gounod in wax, by Franceschi, a copy of a corner of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, with this ingenious dedication: "To my dear musician, Gounod—his brother and friend, Hébert—from

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Michael Angelo." It was sent to him by the eminent painter, now Director of the Academy of France in Rome, where they had been comrades half a century before, on the first occasion of his hearing Gounod's *Mors et Vita.*

Two low divans, covered with Persian rugs, a few chairs and small tables, complete the furniture of the room. But what it is impossible to describe is the undefinable atmosphere of concentrated reverence, of gentle warmth, tenderness, and trust, that seems to surround the new-comer like a blessing or a caress, so subtle and yet penetrating that the sensation remains long after the scene has vanished.

It is here that the master of the house receives his visitors with his perfect courtesy and fascinating manner, without ever keeping them waiting even for an instant, deeming that punctuality is the supreme expression of politeness. His manner is devoid alike of stiffness, conceit, or condescension. He is tall, but quick and lithe in his movements; dressed in a short smoking-jacket of black velvet thrown back on his broad chest, a silk handkerchief loosely knotted round his throat over his white flannel shirt; neat patent-leather shoes on his remarkably small feet, of which he is somewhat proud. He greets you with juvenile vivacity, lifts the small velvet cap that he invariably wears, grasps your hands with the utmost cordiality, and in less time than

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it takes to write these lines you feel as if you had known the Maestro for years, and are perfectly at your ease.

Gounod's features have long been made popular by photography and engraving. But like all those possessed of exuberant vitality, his countenance is too mobile, too expressive, to be faithfully reproduced even by the cleverest artist. The best existing portrait of him—an excellent one—is by Élie Delaunay, his colleague at the Institute of France. He is taken in profile, the head and bust only; the splendid line of the broad and powerful brow standing out from a background of laurels, the bold blue eye, calm and strangely clear, is fixed upon space, the lines of the mouth are firm, with somewhat thick lips, sensuous, but also serious and half-dreamy; the fair beard, already frosted with silver, is spread fan-like on his chest; he clasps on his heart the score of *Don Giovanni*, his musical Gospel, revered by him almost as much as he reveres the Scriptures.

But this is only one aspect of his supple and complex nature. This is the Master, soothed by contemplation, such as he may have looked when he wrote his marvellous melody on the first prelude of Bach, which is probably the purest and most ideal homage ever offered to the Virginity of the Mother of God. It is widely different from the aspect worn by the

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composer who with equal felicity has rendered the despairing wail of Sappho, burying the ruins of her love in the sea, and the bold defiance of the Bacchantes worshipping Pleasure in the ardent intoxication of unholy orgies. Here we have not the poet who has immortalized the delirium of passion in Romeo, the troubled delight of the first fever of love in Faust; who has whispered the verbena and lavender scented idyll of "La Chanson de Magali," or struck the wild chords of Pagan madness in the chorus of "Ulysses." Nor is this the man whom we meet in his study, the irresistible magician, whose fascination is concealed under such frank *bonhomie*, but who will reveal all the kaleidoscopic traits of his artistic temperament in a short hour's interview.

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CHAPTER II.

Sociability of musicians—What Gounod thinks of virtuosi—His favourite interpreters: Madame Viardot, Madame Carvalho, Madame Krauss—Gounod rehearsing his interpreters—"No sentiment"—His privacy invaded by professionals and amateurs—His correspondence—His unvarying politeness and inexhaustible good nature.

It has been remarked that musicians are generally affable, and always easy of access; this may be readily accounted for. The inherent quality of their art being to establish a magnetic communication between their souls and their auditors, they instinctively require companionship and the unfettered intercourse which is a necessity of their profession. Musical thoughts, once formulated, cannot reach the public directly like the thoughts of the painter, the sculptor, the writer or the poet, which at once take hold of mind or eye. To awaken general sympathy with his work, the musician requires the medium of artists too frequently, alas, inferior to their mission, whose indispensable assistance he is compelled to accept. They translate and give voice to words which, written, can only be understood by a very restricted number of the initiated; hence

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the name of "interpreter" given to them. To ensure a faithful rendering, the interpreter must be in constant accordance with the creator. In order thoroughly to understand the part played by these collaborators, we need to specify the exact share that devolves upon them.

This question has been greatly discussed: Have virtuosi—instrument players or singers—a right to the title of artists? I put the question to Gounod, and he answered in these words:—

"The richest palette is a lifeless thing until the hand and brain of the painter warms the colours into life. The virtuoso, a palette in flesh and blood, must carry in himself the intelligence that vivifies it. This alone gives him a claim to be called an artist; this only enables him to reach the impersonal soul of an indifferent and careless public, *blasé* when not ignorant, whose feelings, blunted by excess of refinement, or torpid from want of culture, refuse to be touched by mechanical accents, not soaring higher than the monotonous song of a well-taught bird. If the singer does not infuse some of his personal feeling into his song, neither the natural qualities of his voice, nor his acquired technical knowledge will enable him to thrill his hearer, whatever be the beauty of the musical phrase he renders."

And, borrowing another simile from painting

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(for, as all thoroughly great artists, he is a stranger to none of the sister arts), he continued :—

"What is called 'artistic intelligence,' 'artistic feeling,' is not easily definable, but is nevertheless something highly important, for it is what makes Rembrandt differ from a sign-painter. *Ars est homo additus naturæ*, says Bacon, and it is after all perhaps the best definition we have found as yet : it may be said of the *virtuoso* that he is, or ought to be *homo additus arti*,"—and then quoting the curious and interesting, yet little known dialogue of St. Augustine on music, he concluded with the words of the illustrious Bishop, a profound thinker as well as a great saint, who applied them to the "actors and flute players" of his own time :—

"Art depends on combined reason and imitation. Those who consult their senses, and trust to their memory what has pleased them, with a certain talent for imitation, however capable and clever they may seem, do not possess musical science unless they have also the clear and correct intelligence of the artistic facts they transmit."

In the same way that the painter collaborates with nature, Gounod considers the musical interpreter collaborates with the composer. The theatrical expression "create a part" is not a meaningless phrase. The work which the

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author has created by his heart and his imagination, is, so to speak, created afresh by another's heart and imagination—intelligent reflexes of his own—by which it is conveyed to the public. It unfortunately frequently happens that the interpreter, false to his charge, betrays the author, and perverts the idea he had to translate; but when he rises to the height of his task, he becomes a valuable aid to the creator.

Gounod will tell you what he owes to the three women whom his good fortune has placed in his path; Pauline Viardot, Madame Miolan Carvalho, and Gabrielle Krauss. When, as a young beginner in dramatic composition, he superintended the rehearsals of *Sappho* at the Opera in 1851, and heard from the lips of the illustrious sister of Malibran the first notes of the *arioso* of the third act, *Sois béni par une mourante*, his work seemed to him transfigured. What he had conceived with his whole soul, and written down with tears, had been assimilated by a heart worthy of his own, and the pathos of that intense passage was rendered still more touching by the emotion that moistened the eyes of the prima donna. The names of Madame Krauss, who, thirty years later resuscitated the amorous Lesbian, and created the tender and charming part of Pauline in the too little known opera drawn from the *Polyeucte* of Corneille; Madame Carvalho, his Marguerite, his Juliette, his Baucis and his Mireille, are in-

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separably linked with the Maestro's, and posterity will acknowledge that these singers added fresh laurels to those that he had already won. He does not deny their claims, and his gratitude rewards them.

But this same collaboration of execution with composition can only be complete if the flame that inspires the first be kindled at the fire of the second. This is why the author of a lyrical drama superintends its rehearsals with such minute attention; he must feel certain that his intentions are rendered with scrupulous fidelity, and he is there to galvanize his interpreters into life with the magic spark which in their turn they will transmit to the public by an electric current. A considerable portion of a composer's time is given up to this duty, in the execution of which he contracts those frank and sociable habits previously alluded to.

Nothing is more interesting to follow than this labour of *mise au point*, to watch the progress, at first so slow, of the methods by which the musical idea gradually develops itself, like the butterfly from its chrysalis. Gounod especially, with his vivacity, his fluency, his brilliant metaphorical speech, is inimitable in his commentaries on the character of the work under consideration. The most obtuse of musicians could not fail to perform his part creditably after the master has explained it to him in his picturesque,

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poetical, and yet precise language; he has the rare gift of always selecting the most appropriate terms; they are perfectly lucid in their communicative warmth, and his angelic patience rarely fails.

Only excessive and unusual stupidity or palpable ill-will can provoke Gounod to a show of temper at rehearsals, but he is at all times very firm, even obstinate, and invariably gets his own way. The day is long past when he had to submit against his better judgment to the caprice of a reigning "star;" the prestige of his renown now renders such concessions unnecessary. But if he expects to have his opinion respected—and was there ever a more legitimate demand?—no composer is less exacting so soon as he recognizes that his interpreters sincerely wish to do right, are intelligent, and have the artistic probity that makes them give to the uttermost all of which they are capable, without stint or exaggeration. Indulgent, because he is so strong, Gounod is sparing of censure, even if he be equally so of praise; he is ever scrupulously just. Ten, twenty times, more if necessary, he will have a single passage repeated, and when the result has at last proved satisfactory, he will say with his cheerful kindliness and charming smile, "*C'est bien, mes enfants, c'est très bien, vous êtes bien gentils,*" and all hearts are won.

He is frequently heard to repeat a warning,

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which excites some surprise in the bystanders until they have thoroughly mastered its import, "No sentiment, above all, no sentiment, I beg of you." These words must not be taken literally. He will have sentiment, and when he sings himself it is marvellous how much of it he infuses into his song. His tenor voice, once so sweet, which he manages with infinite skill, not of professional technicalities, but of intention and feeling, is now impaired by age; at times he can hardly sing at all. But what matters? he is admirable, inimitable, superior to the greatest singers, because he is true, because his sentiment is sincere, and his emotion real. This is what makes the majority of composers, even when unendowed with vocal talent, sing their own music in a characteristic way, which gives their disciples an accurate idea of what is expected of them better than any explanation.

Gounod possesses this gift in an unusual degree, both as regards the compositions of others and his own. No one can sing Mozart as he does; it is with him a question of expression, of suppressed feeling, of intense vibration, the *nescio quid flebile*, on which it is vain to dilate. With a voice that hardly carries beyond his piano, he will give Marguerite's appeal to heaven, "*Anges purs, anges radieux*," or render the ecstatic triumph of Polyeucte after his baptism, so as to reveal beauties which the most applauded vocaliza-

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tion of a famous *prima donna*, or the highest notes of a fashionable tenor have never equalled. However, with him it is not so much *sentiment* as *expression*, and that is why he forbids the former and exacts the latter. When he says to his interpreters, "No sentiment," he means to caution them against spurious sentimentality, straining after false effect, exaggeration of shading, excess of contrast, all things that weaken sonority, emasculate rhythm, slacken the movement, dwarf the style, narrow the idea, in one word, adulterate the character of a great work. The less experienced musicians are, the more they are apt to commit these faults against which Gounod is ever energetically contending.

Besides opera and concert performers, the singers and musicians who come to Gounod for advice are countless. Professionals and amateurs storm his study to glean from the master what, in musical jargon, are called his intentions. The non-musical world scoffs at the mania which now prevails to importune composers for the favour of "a hearing." Professionals may be excused, they admit, but society people—how preposterous! The more sensible shrug their shoulders and call this affectation, a cheap way of exciting the admiration of outsiders credulous enough to believe that the approbation of the maestro has hallowed the postulant, or that he is admitted into the intimacy of the great man.

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It is easy to satirize what cannot be understood; but the fact remains that anybody who has not heard Gounod instruct his interpreters, cannot realize what may be learnt in half an hour. The greater the musician, the better is he as a professor, and the more perfect the lesson. This is, for instance, what I heard him say to a young girl who intended to adopt the stage as a profession, and who was endowed with natural and even required gifts, a good voice, and intelligence, but whose diction was defective, a very common failing nowadays :—

"Lyric sound is finest when it is most akin to speech. The purely vocal sound, however beautiful, requires to be varied by the *word* which alone gives expression, dramatic feeling, warmth and life. Pure diction is the first law of song." It would be impossible to convey a perfectly just idea more clearly. Those words of Gounod might be the epigraph of a "Musical Method," or to speak more strongly, they are in themselves a complete musical method.

It is not surprising, therefore, that all are eager to avail themselves of his lucid teaching, and to hear him explain his lofty views of art in general. He tolerates frequently indiscreet applications, partly in the interests of a better rendering of his own music, the cherished offspring of his own soul, over which he watches with paternal solicitude,

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partly because he is the most amiable of men, and cannot deny himself to those who seek his advice. The writer of these pages has seen budding Marguerites and embryo Juliets disturb him in his study, induce him to sit down before the piano, and, regardless of their incapacity, their stupidity, or ignorance, but with a lively sense of their own merits, make him play the accompaniments of some of his finest melodies. And when, in conscience, he feels himself bound to tell them that they cannot sing, nor even keep time, he is more grieved to admit the facts than they can be to hear them. Nor is this all.

A young foreigner, who, through her relations with Gounod's family, had obtained a hearing by him, entered his room with a roll of music in her hand. After some desultory conversation, while the maestro placed his fingers on the keys, his visitor produced, not one of his own compositions, but a song by Massenet. She had not even the pretext for troubling him of soliciting his directions for the proper interpreting of his music, but merely came to get a lesson, as she would have done from any ordinary music master, with the difference that in this case the lesson was purely gratuitous. Gounod showed neither anger nor impatience, but submitted to the torture of listening to a hopelessly bad performance, deriving perhaps some comfort from

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the fact that it was not a composition of his that was murdered. When the singer stopped, he told her the truth, or at least part of the truth; with infinite gentleness he tried to make her understand that if she wished to earn her living in any artistic profession, she might perhaps select painting with a better chance of success. But all his consideration, and the comforting assurances he keeps in reserve for similar circumstances, did not prevent the young person from showing that she was offended and aggrieved.

"What people come to look for here," he said afterwards, smiling gently, "is not advice, but flattery. My sincerity only makes them angry; but when these girls come to face the public, it will avail them little to say, 'Gounod thinks I sing beautifully.' Do they imagine this would prevent them from being hissed?"

The effort it costs him to pronounce adverse criticism can be appreciated only when one sees with what gracious indulgence he encourages any young artists in whom his quick eye perceives latent talent. Even before they have opened their lips he has taken their measure. "I see it in their eyes," he says; "one has always the voice of one's eyes." If they have created a good impression, if he sees that they are intelligent, and eager to learn, it becomes a pure joy to him to teach, assist, and

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serve them. This generosity is well known, and advantage is taken of it.

The number of intruders is swelled by a crowd of unknown artists begging for letters of introduction, authors proposing a libretto or a poem, autograph-hunters, and inquisitive idlers. "The pace is too fast for me," he said one day, glancing at the voluminous correspondence on his desk. As the physical strength of an illustrious man begins to wane with coming years, fresh demands are made upon it. There was a time when Gounod could have done all that is expected of him with less exertion and fatigue; but then he was left in peace, and he had the leisure to write *Sappho*, and the choruses of *Ulysses*, *Faust* and *Philemon*. Interviews and letter-writing are now the bane of his existence. He deplores and regrets this, for, as he says, "To give one's life is good, to fritter it away is sinful."

Sometimes he gets excited on this topic, and his transient anger evaporates in amusing objurgations. "Fancy an individual writing to me: 'Illustrious Master, you have not answered the letter I had the honour of sending you.' And who the devil asked him to send it?" This does not prevent him from replying to the second note if he has not answered the first. It is his weakness, always to answer, to answer too much, and a letter must be very inane, very

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absurd, even beyond the average inanity and absurdity, for him to cast it aside. These epistles come from all quarters of the globe. "I am asked everything," he said one day; "I expect the next request will be for a bottle of blacking! A pear-tree is made to bear pears, a musician to make music, not to be turned into an inquiry office."

His inability to give pain, his unconquerable politeness, embitter his existence, and also, it must be confessed, for he owns it himself, "*le besoin d'être aimé.*" He wants to be loved, and this is what makes him so lovable; he unconsciously acts so as to create around him a current of sympathy, an atmosphere of affection inexpressibly grateful to his nature. He achieves his aim, but his time is no longer his own. He sincerely deplores this; he taxes himself with unpardonable weakness, but remains incorrigible. He declares he will lock and bolt his door, but it still stands wide open. He deliberately resolves to fly from the turmoil of the world, and the crowd of intruders in which he "sinks," according to his own expression, to seek peace and repose in Italy or elsewhere; but this is always to be done in the coming season, and every winter sees him back to the whirlpool which he deprecates and adores.

Croaking old people aver that Paris is shorn of its former splendours, but even such as revolutions

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and the encroaching democracy, which threatens to destroy French wit and grace, have made it, it is still so irresistibly fascinating a city, that it never loses its hold on those who have once been bewitched by its magic.

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CHAPTER III.

Concerts and festivals—Gounod, leader of the orchestra—Why a composer likes to direct the execution of his music—Sensitiveness of musicians—Opinions of St. Augustine and Alexandre Dumas on play-acting—Over the 500th performance of *Faust* and the first of *L'Arlésienne.*

GOUNOD is not only besieged in his own house, he is constantly prevailed upon to leave it; he is importuned to attend at Concerts, musical Masses, festivals where he alone can direct the execution of his works. If it is for a charitable performance, his presence will double the sale of tickets, and he will consent; when he has given his promise he never breaks it. His punctuality and exactitude are proverbial, and might serve as a model to a number of far less illustrious and less busy people, whose contempt of ordinary politeness, off-handishness and carelessness are the patent of importance they confer on themselves, and which is accepted by too many snobs.

Much of his time is wasted in rehearsals, hearings, and frequent journeys, for he is in constant demand in the provinces. When he had composed his Mass in honour of Joan of

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Arc, at the request of the Archbishop of Rheims, it was first sung in the Cathedral where the Maid of Orleans witnessed the coronation of Charles VII.; from thence he was urged to direct its execution at Orleans in commemoration of the siege that made the "*bonne Lorraine*" immortal. The city in which she died craved to hear the Mass in its turn, and Gounod started for Rouen; then Nantes and Angers solicited his presence at festivals given in her honour. At Bordeaux *Mors et Vita* is performed, and frenzied applause greets the great composer, whom the enthusiastic Southerners carry in triumph. He is seen wielding the *bâton* at Brussels and at Antwerp. England has not forgotten the Birmingham festival, where *Redemption* was heard for the first time, and if *Mors et Vita* was given in the absence of the Maestro, it was not from any disinclination or ill-will on his part that he was not present.

It must be mentioned here that Gounod is not, or is no longer a perfect orchestra-leader. The qualities required for this exacting task, suppleness of body and mind, strength of brain and muscle, coolness, physical and moral endurance, are not compatible with his advanced years, however hale and green his old age has remained; and yet the performances he directs himself are generally rendered excellent by the mere influence of the moral authority he exercises over

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the performers. Their eagerness to please the master, whose genius is worshipped when he is absent, and whose person is beloved when he is present, brings out the best qualities of all, and aids the action of the magnetic current which, passing from the interpreters to the audiences, communicates emotion, and intensifies that emotion if it comes directly from the author to the interpreter. Gounod's prestige as man and composer is so great that, from the prima donna to the smallest chorister, from the first violin to the big drum, all feel their faculties galvanized by his presence, and their powers raised to a level which is a guarantee of success.

Without special ill-feeling towards Gounod in particular, harsh remarks are often made on the restlessness that always seems to possess artists. This may proceed, say the critics, from a wish to oblige, from an incapacity for saying "No," from amiable good nature, but also, and above all, it arises from conceit, and this causes composers to put themselves forward as they do. It is natural that they should superintend the rehearsals of their works, which is probably a condition of success, but why should they direct the execution in person, throwing themselves bodily into the struggle, putting themselves *en évidence* to increase the attractions of the programme, to compel the applause of an audience, whose liberty of manifestation is hampered by

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the presence of the Maestro? Is not this lowering the dignity of the artist and ranking him with the mountebank? If this opinion is not so clearly expressed, it is at least more than hinted, as the following example will show.

On the 4th of November, 1887, Gounod's masterpiece was given for the 500th time at the National Academy of Music in Paris, the author of *Faust* taking his seat as leader of the orchestra. The press has not exaggerated the reception he received from a delighted public; it was an unprecedented ovation. The following day, a man whom everybody will recognize when it is said that he is *facile princeps* among French dramatic authors, was talking about this memorable night; he was gratified by the admiration and enthusiasm lavished on his neighbour and friend, but he could not refrain from adding, "Assuredly it is a great occasion, a memorable triumph for Gounod, only I am not partial to these public exhibitions, they are too histrionic."

Such a speech from a large-minded, intelligent and superior man is, to say the least, surprising, but it affords an index to the unfavourable judgments of a mean and inferior class.

Artists after all are not of a clay different from the common herd; their special gifts do not exempt them from the human weaknesses of other mortals. If the thirst for fame is to be

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numbered among these, they are more than ordinarily prone to it, and it leads them easily to the feverish craving for homage and applause which are Fame's outward manifestations.

A Father of the Church who spoke with experience—for before being a great saint he had been an accomplished man of the world, which means a great sinner—has discussed this question. In his dialogue *De Musica*, in the midst of a great deal of dry and scholastic dissertation on the rules of rhythm and metre, pyrrhic measures, iambics and trochees, dactyls, antepasts, tribrachs, anapests, St. Augustine says many true and wise words concerning musical art. With regard to "histrions"—a word applied equally to virtuosi and composers, for in his time the two classes of artists were confounded—he has written the following paradox, which seems to justify the remark quoted above :—

"When you have conclusively proved to me that the actor does not display his talents to please the public, to win money and applause, I shall grant you that such a man may possess the science of music. If, on the contrary—which is probable—there does not exist one who does not make money and celebrity the aim of his profession, it must be owned that they have not the musical sense. What would be thought of a man who, possessing a gold ingot, sold it for ten pieces of silver? Which should be prized higher, the

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treasures of intellect, or the favour conceded by unreasoning appreciation? Nothing can be more hazardous, more uncertain, more subject to popular fickleness than the applause of the crowd in a theatre."

St. Augustine is severe—but it is the "*Magister*," the saint, who speaks! Under the mask of "*Discipulus*" the man of the world steps in and softens the rigour of this severe language by a sensible and truthful observation :—

"It is absolutely impossible to find on the stage a musician who loves his art solely for itself and not on account of the fame and profit he derives from it, for such an one could hardly be met with in a School of Philosophy." The "Discipulus" has the last word; why therefore need we be more critical nowadays than the holy Bishop of Hippo?

Does the public realize what are the feelings of a compóser on witnessing the satisfactory execution of his works? Is it to be believed that his chief feeling at such times is the expectation of a success flattering to his vanity? Anyone who is not totally devoid of ideality must know that it is not so. I have seen Gounod's eyes fill with tears as he listened to Faure singing, or rather saying, the recitatives of Christ in his *Redemption*. Can any one believe he was acting, or bring so insulting an accusation against him? He whose genius had excited the emotions of

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a rapt audience, felt the same emotions himself, intensified by an acute nervous sensibility and by a natural effect of reaction; his heart beat in unison with the six thousand hearts in which the inspired singer had kindled the flame that had leapt from Gounod's soul to his. To feel a large audience spell-bound, human beings vibrating at the accents one has created, palpitating with one's own flesh and blood, is not this the supreme reward of an artist's ambition?

Beethoven deaf, and Bach burying sublime compositions in a drawer because he had not the means to have them performed, were compelled to rest content with the satisfaction of silent work. Happier those who live at a period when artists are the idols of the crowd. None has known more truly than Gounod the intoxication and delight of popular adulation.

But those joys are never quite complete if the author is not himself playing an active part in the execution of his works. When he holds the orchestra, the singers, and the audience, hanging upon every movement of his baton, he is in closer and more direct communion with all of them, as though in physical and personal contact, and the magnetic current that unites them grows every moment more powerful. The composer is carried away less by the outward applause than by his inner emotion, he is more

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deeply thrilled by what he gives than by what he receives. In that instant of speechless ecstasy, he ceases to care for praise, applause, or congratulations; they disturb his ideal happiness, and cause him a painful sensation as if he heard the sighing harmonies of an Eolian melody broken into by the rude crash of drums and cymbals.

This does not imply that the artist is at all times indifferent to approbation—even to flattery. No, he loves praise, because he is human; he loves it because it is an encouragement, an impetus, and an exciting manifestation. He is equally sensitive to criticism—to a certain extent from vanity, but more especially because censure is like cold water thrown on the fire of his spirit, almost a physical sensation, which is painful and irritating. If he rebels, protests, and retaliates, it is because his serenity is disturbed, his artistic faith is shaken. Shall he be spared these attacks? Certainly not. Suffering is the fate of mankind, and if it is more acute in the artist, that is the price he must pay for the equally keener joys that are vouchsafed to him, joys so radiant that they wipe out in an hour the memory of long years of doubt and disappointment.

Cruel and severe have been the blows dealt by the public to artists, even as the applause and enthusiasm have been ardent and boundless.

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Singers have been known to die because they were hissed. When Wagner was present at the Paris Opera during the fatal performance of *Tannhäuser*, which was pitilessly wrecked by the clamour of a stupid cabal, no artist ever went through such an agony. But when on the 500th night of *Faust* the curtain fell on the garden scene, when floods of dazzling light poured on the golden ornamentation of the house and the flashing diamonds worn by fair women, as on a magic frame enclosing all that was celebrated and eminent in Paris, and three thousand spectators, pale and with moist eyes, simultaneously rose to do honour to the beloved Maestro, and express their gratitude for the supreme delight they owed to him—no artist ever knew such deep elation or such unrivalled triumph.

The dramatic author likewise yields his living idea to public appreciation, but his art appeals more to the mind than to the senses of the audience, and the sensations experienced by the latter being less intense, the magnetic current between author and spectator is less powerful. The writer does not infuse so much of his flesh and blood into his work as the musician. There exists a play in the modern French *répertoire* in which the shares of the composer and the dramatist are almost alike ; I mean the delightfully simple and rustic drama, with choruses and symphonies, called *l'Arlésienne*, a gem in which

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the stone and the setting are equally perfect. The "*Tout Paris*" of its first night perpetrated the biggest blunder of the many for which it is responsible, when it gave an unfriendly reception to this play. M. Alphonse Daudet related lately (after the hundredth performance of *l'Arlésienne* at the *Odéon*), that on the first night, "pale with the dread of a *première*," the authors stood at the wings, propped up against the scenery, impotent witnesses of the disaster, and that of the two he who suffered most was certainly the composer. He convulsively clutched his collaborator's arm, saying in a choked, despairing voice: "They do not listen." The cruelty of not being heard! The drama may be coldly received, hissed even, but it is listened to, were it only to damn it; it is allowed to speak in its own defence. But so soon as music does not touch the heart, indifference like a sheet of ice drops between the author's fire and the soul of the audience—all is over—all is lost! Cold perfunctory praise tardily awarded to the musician cannot heal his wounds. Unhappy and lamented Bizet—on his tomb only were laid the laurels of fame.

Gounod, the spoilt child of the public, has been more fortunate; but then the author of *Carmen* died at thirty-seven, while the author of *Faust* has lived long enough to enter into his immortality in the flesh.

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Part II.

GOUNOD'S CHILDHOOD, YOUTH AND MUSICAL EDUCATION.

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CHAPTER I.

What is genius?—The subjective and objective element of artistic talent—What Gounod thinks of artistic originality—Difference between the affinities of intellectual temperaments and imitations—Gounod's views of what the artist must find within himself and what he may borrow from the masters.

It is customary to inquire before examining the work of an artist, who have been his masters, what models he has chosen, and what influence both have exercised upon him? Gounod's example proves the puerility of these methods.

Genius, or even talent of a higher order, is absolutely personal, it is indebted to no one, but develops itself freely, unfettered by imitation. The artist receives from his teachers technical knowledge—what might be called the concrete or objective element of his art. The study of great works also tends to enrich his mind and to form his taste. But the subjective element, which constitutes his own genius, must exist in himself and cannot be borrowed.

So long as he is a student, he resembles the infant who cannot walk without the guiding hands of its nurse, he almost always unconsciously imitates the professor who has taught

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him his first steps, or the master whose genius has first impressed him in a marked way. But once in possession of the methods of his art, he casts aside the leading-strings, and—it may be haltingly at first—takes the path to which his temperament impels him, without any doctrinal prejudices. Originality is the primordial and essential condition of art, and he who aspires to the name of artist should take for his motto the charming line of Alfred de Musset :—

"Mon verre n'est pas grand, mais je bois dans mon verre."

Not to force his talent in a hot-bed is an important rule for an artist to observe ; to seek inspiration in himself alone, and ask only such alien advice as will enable him to put it into shape, is the law he must obey. Essentially a creator, he becomes untrue to his mission when he stoops to be an imitator.

The exact meaning of "originality" should be accurately understood. Gounod defined it in the public session of the Institute of France, on the 25th of October, 1886, as follows :[1]—

"In the collaboration of the artist with nature, it is his own personal emotion which gives his work its original character. Oddity is too often mistaken for originality—they are two

[1] Like all the academic lectures, this discourse has been printed under the title of "Nature and Art," Paris, 1886 ; by Firmin Didot and Co., publishers to the Institute. These pamphlets, of which only a small number is printed, are extremely rare, and highly prized by collectors on account of the difficulty of procuring them.

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absolutely different qualities. *Oddity* is an abnormal, unhealthy condition, a mitigated form of insanity, belonging to the class of pathological cases graphically expressed by its synonym, *eccentricity*, 'deviation by the tangent.' On the contrary, *originality* is the distinct line which connects the individual with the common centre of intelligence. A work of art being the produce of a common mother, Nature, and of a distinct father, the artist, originality is really a declaration of paternity; it is the baptismal name added to the patronymic, it is the passport of the individual made valid by the community."

In requiring from every artist this quality, so clearly expounded by him, Gounod does not deny that there are points in common between certain artistic temperaments.

"As there are not on a tree two leaves absolutely alike," he says, "humanity does not show us two beings exactly identical; humanity consists of a certain number of species, infinitely subdivided into varieties possessing all the different degrees of intellectual organization. Every artist is the issue from those who have preceded him, but that does not imply that he imitates them."

Moreover, he is capable of remaining original even with a certain measure of imitation, a subtle distinction very justly defined by Scudo,

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the Italian who, forty years ago, wrote the musical criticisms in the *Revue des Deux Mondes.* "To imitate in art," he said, "is to appropriate an idea conceived by another; this can be done in two ways. The first, which is unconscious, springs from the consanguinity of genius, and resides in inspiration; the second, which is deliberate and the result of will, is manifested by execution. When the imitation is divination of a mind by another mind, fertilization of a soul by the breath of another soul, it is legitimate and noble. When born of stratagem and fraud, an ingenious labour of the brain in which the heart has no part, it becomes fallacious and sinful."

To elucidate this definition by an example, we may quote Cherubini, who followed Palestrina, but without copying him—merely as a disciple. Every musician, provided he be sufficiently advanced in his art, may write a fugue like one of Bach's, and deserves to be called a plagiarist. But beyond the more or less voluntary imitation under the two forms just mentioned, there is the alliance of genius united by affinities, which is not a resemblance, such as may exist, for instance, between the authors of *Faust* and *Don Giovanni.* Gounod has not been influenced by Mozart, no direct action has been exercised by the latter over the former; but out of the similarity of their

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natures a tacit accordance and sympathy was created, which in the living genius has taken the shape of admiring deference for the dead, without modifying his own characteristic personality. On the other hand, there are notable and natural antipathies, or, to call them by a less harsh name, divergences, which for ever separate two artists. Who could ever couple the names of Mozart and Berlioz?

Ought the lessons and examples of the masters of Art to be scorned and set aside? Ought the traditions of the past to be forgotten by the present generation under the pretext of independence? In France, whatever may be the case in other countries, an instinct of rebellion has arisen in the schools and the studios, as well as among the masses; the great principle of human liberty is proclaimed and acted upon before the eager apostles have gained strength to stand alone. Gounod has spoken freely himself on this subject, at a time when an active campaign was set on foot against sending the *laureates* of the Institute to Rome, with a pension from the State, more especially the musicians.

"What strikes me most," he said, "in these censures upon the School of Rome, is that they are but the outcome of a desire, more or less frankly formulated, and which embodies the whole programme of the opposition;—'No

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more Masters!' This is probably what is meant by modern art. No more education, no more acquired and transmitted notions—in other words, no more capital—hence no patrimony and no inheritance. No past—therefore no more traditions or intellectual paternity. We have reached the stage of spontaneous generation, for there can be no alternative—either teaching, or intuitive science. And it is worthy of notice that the advocates of the new system are precisely those who are for ever talking of the School of the Future. The Future! On what grounds do you appeal to it, when to-morrow you will be that Past which you condemn? 'Genius,' you say, 'cannot be taught, either it exists or it does not; it is in no human power to give it or to take it away.' Granted; but it is no less true that, to quote Ingres, a great artist who was qualified to express an opinion, there is no art without science. No; it is impossible to communicate genius, because genius is not transferable, because it is an essentially personal gift; but what is transferable is the language by which genius manifests itself, and without which it is dumb and helpless. Were Raphael and Mozart not men of genius? Did they think themselves justified in rejecting the traditional teaching, that not only initiated them into the practice of their art, but pointed out the way by which they might most

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readily attain it, saving them loss of time, and disappointment in the quest of a certainty guaranteed by centuries of experience? The presumption to dethrone history with paralogisms is indeed a sorry jest. As well affirm at once that writers and orators need not study their language, their grammar, or their dictionary." (*Nouvelle Revue*, Jan. 1st, 1887.)

There are two kinds of study. First, the work of the pupil, who, as he listens to the master's lesson, assimilates practical methods; he only requires an average amount of understanding, aided by some special aptitude—he learns to be taught. Once possessed of the intellectual tools provided by the teaching received, it is no longer outwardly, but inwardly, that the scholar must seek the elements of knowledge. His labour becomes what Gounod calls "meditation before the altar of his soul." He will still search for examples in the masterpieces of his craft, but only as regards technicalities. It is in the co-ordination of his thoughts that he will find inspiration, and this communion with himself is the labour of the artist.

"Your glance must be turned inward," Gounod often tells his disciples, and therein lies the secret of artistic serenity. Not only self-communion, but communion with Nature. The master has laid down the law: "In art reality alone is a servile copyism; and ideality alone is

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an erratic chimera." It is from the close connection of imagination and reality, from the union of the finite with the infinite, that the product of art springs. The artist seeks in nature the idea that is afterwards fertilized by his soul, and animated by his intelligence, so that it will come forth in a form perceptible to the masses; no alien hand can assist in this conception and transformation. In the academic lecture quoted above, Gounod has expressed these views in a form which, although abstruse, is yet perfectly intelligible.

"To pass from interior and tangible realities to emotion, and from emotion to reason, is the progressive march of intellectual development. This is admirably summed up by St. Augustine in one of the luminous and concise formulas with which his works abound: *Ab exterioribus ad interiora, ab interioribus ad superiora* (From outside to inside, from inside to on high).

All Gounod's spirit breathes in these words: elevation of mind, breadth of artistic views, graphic language, even to the quotation from the Fathers of the Church, strong food on which his soul has fed with passionate eagerness during many years.

He recognizes to the full the use of teaching. He knows at what cost a man becomes a master of his art, and that before he turns himself a model and a teacher, he must patiently,

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modestly, and laboriously learn from others. However, he does not deny that the flame which constitutes genius burns secretly in certain beings predestined to a great future; contact with other fires causes it to leap into life, work fans it, but, nevertheless, it is a spark lit by Nature, not by man. This is why he says, "Only those who know can be taught." He likes to recall the striking and profound axiom of Socrates, "I am an *accoucheur*," and in the free and piquant phraseology which is the charm of his conversation, he adds: "Genius is the male which impregnates the germ, but the germ must exist; a barren woman remains barren; in the same way, teaching is a fertilizing element."

But Gounod formally repudiates the supposed influences which, according to most of his critics and biographers, certain musicians have exerted over him. Of the impressions which revealed to him the real path to follow, three have remained imperishable in his memory; these he calls "musical shocks," and they form the true history of his vocation. He himself has given me the following account of them.

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CHAPTER II.

Gounod's vocation related by himself—Three musical revelations —*Der Freischütz*, Marie Malibran, *Don Giovanni*—Birth and family of Gounod—Early musical aptitude—His education—Thorough classical training—His studies at the Conservatoire.

THE first of these impressions goes back to Gounod's early childhood. In the winter of 1825, he was not yet seven years old, and was living with his family in the *Rue des Grands Augustins*, close to the *Hôtel de la Monnaie*, a street in the old and grim quarter on the left bank of the Seine, where he was born. One night his mother took him to the neighbouring theatre of the Odéon, where, for the first time in France, Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* was being performed, under the title of *Robin des Bois*, in the atrocious paraphrase of Castil Blaze. At that time, under the pretence of arranging them, German lyrical masterpieces were frequently disarranged; and stage managers without honesty, librettists without conscience, committed such mutilations with impunity. Even *Don Giovanni* was "adapted" for the stage of the Paris Opera in the middle of this century!

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Der Freischütz in its imperfect form was imperfectly sung by inferior artists, whose names are now forgotten; nevertheless, it was on that night that the author of *Faust* felt his first artistic thrill; "A simple sensation," he says, "for at that age the faculty of reflection does not as yet exist. In the same way that luminous rays become brighter when they are reflected in a mirror, feelings grow stronger and more vivid when the power of retrospection comes with manhood. It is a mistake to believe that sensibility is dulled by age; on the contrary, it grows more acute, so long, naturally, as the mind retains its vigour." Gounod adds: "This is why I consider the loves of early youth as incomplete, purely external and superficial, when they are not intensified by the crystallization of a fully developed mind."

We have left far behind us the small boy taken to the play, probably as a reward for a correctly learnt lesson or well-written copy, and who sat, stirred to the depths of his little unconscious soul, in religious ecstasy and dumb adoration. His hearing one of the purest of lyrical dramas was for the child a happy initiation into musical beauty. He does not remember whether the fantastic scene of the casting of the bullets frightened him or not; what particularly struck him was the Hunter's Chorus. He anxiously asked his mother whether

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"they would fire," and trembled slightly. The serenity of the music reassured him; he drank in with delight all the exquisite details of the orchestration. In after-life, when he opened the score for the first time, he recognized them all, and greeted them as old friends. From this instance can be guessed how keen his impressions had been at an age when reasoning powers are generally quite undeveloped.

Sixty years and more have passed since the child experienced his instinctive admiration for Weber's opera, and it has been developed in the man, in the light of matured judgment. The limpid purity of the German Maestro, the elevation of thought, the simplicity of means by which he obtains his elegant refinement, his subdued and mysterious luminosity, are qualities rare at all times, and tending more and more to disappear. They are of an order to be highly appreciated by Gounod, himself a fervent lover of the beautiful in its noblest forms.

Six years later he was a schoolboy whose good conduct and application had won him an extra holiday; he availed himself of this favour to go to the *Théâtre des Italiens*, and hear Rossini's *Otello* sung by Rubini and Marie Malibran. The artistic germ deposited in the child's heart by Nature, and which had opened to the influence of Weber's music, had slowly but continuously developed itself from that hour.

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Now it is a true artist's soul vibrating to the passionate notes of the incomparable Malibran. It is no longer the vague awakening of emotions provoked by the grace of a picturesque melody, it is the dramatic appeal of a golden voice, thrilling a virgin heart with unknown and powerful sensations. Shut up in his school, the schoolboy dreams only of the woman to whom he owes these haunting memories; he is in love with her—honestly, blindly so, for in a simple and innocent fashion he experiences all the intoxication, even the jealousy, of ardent love. He is jealous of the composers whose music she sings, and an engrossing thought takes possession of his mind: "If the time should only come when I can write an opera for *her*." In vain did he hurry and hasten that blissful moment, it did not come soon enough—death forestalled the Maestro. But if the great Malibran, prematurely carried off in the zenith of her fame, never breathed Gounod's melodies, Fortune took pity on his despair, and it was her sister who, a little later, opened the door of Fame to the obscure beginner. This coincidence is not without a strange and pathetic interest.

Henceforth the boy was possessed by a feverish longing to end his classical studies, and devote himself to music, but it was only in the following year that his vocation was irrevocably fixed. He was not quite fourteen, when on

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hearing *Don Giovanni* at the *Théâtre des Italiens*, his whole artistic temperament was galvanized into irresistible ardour.

The words of Rossini concerning Mozart are not forgotten : being asked whom he considered the first of musicians, he answered unhesitatingly, "Beethoven." "What of Mozart?" asked his questioner. "Oh, Mozart," replied Rossini, "he is not the first—he is the only one!"

Unconsciously young Gounod expressed the same idea in another form, when, on that memorable day of January, 1832, he astonished his mother on his return from the theatre by his enthusiasm. "You seem very fond of that music," she said to him. "Oh, mother," he answered ecstatically, "it is not that music — *it is Music!*" From this moment the boy's vocation was imperious, irresistible, a loosened torrent that no power on earth could drive back to its source. "If they had attempted to prevent me from learning music," he says, when he alludes to those old days, "I should have run away to America and hidden in some corner where I could have studied undisturbed."

Charles Gounod belonged to a family of artists, who ought to have had no prejudice against the musical profession, and yet they were not favourable to his adopting it. His father was a painter, to whom the restoration of

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some of the pictures at Versailles was entrusted. Among his paternal ancestry are "engravers, furbishers of the king's weapons," housed in this capacity at the Palace of the Louvre. Charles François Gounod was born on the 17th of June, 1818, in a modest apartment of the *Rue de l'Éperon*, in the centre of that portion of Old Paris, greatly altered since, which lies behind the ancient Abbey of St. Germain des Prés, on the left bank of the river. He lost his father at a very early age, and his mother undertook the sole charge of his education, as well as that of his brother Urbain, his senior by ten years—now dead.

Madame Gounod was a woman of rare merit and intense piety; she was an excellent musician, and gave piano lessons during thirty-two years. It is probable that the musical faculties of the child, as well as the mystical tendencies of the man, were a maternal legacy. It is a fact that he does not remember learning music—he says so himself, adding, that it must have come to him with his mother's milk, and that he assimilated its language before he was able to speak. Madame Gounod had rocked him to sleep in his infancy, not with silly nursery songs, crooned in shrill and vulgar tones, but with the intervals of the scale, the perfect and imperfect concords, and the discords followed by their natural resolution. His ear was thus

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perfectly trained, and he felt himself a musician before he could spell the letters of the word; the names of the notes were the first he faltered. At the age of two, in the gardens of Passy, where he was taken for exercise, he would say, "That dog barks in *sol*," and the neighbours used to call him, "*Le petit musicien.*" He likes to repeat what he said one day in that far-distant childhood. He had been listening to the different cries of the street vendors: "Oh," he exclaimed suddenly, "that woman cries out a *do* that weeps." The two notes with which she hawked her carrots and cabbages actually formed the minor third: C, E flat. The baby scarcely out of his leading strings already felt the mournful character of this combination.

A similar anecdote is related of another of the French composers. One day, when a visitor suffering from great lameness entered his mother's drawing-room, little Camille St. Saëns—the future author of *Ascanio*—who was playing in the adjoining room, struck by the unaccustomed rhythm of the step, exclaimed, "How funny, that gentleman makes a *croche pointée* as he walks." If all composers are not infant prodigies like Mozart, their special faculties generally reveal themselves very early, showing that they are essentially gifts of Nature.

With the development of Gounod's mind, his artistic feeling deepened, until the day when it

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had become a vocation. When at last Madame Gounod took her son, then thirteen years old, to Professor Reicha, and submitted to him the simple attempts at composition which Gounod now calls, "My musical rubbish," the old contrapuntist said to the mother, "This child knows everything—I have only got to teach it to him."

Madame Gounod's practical common sense led her to fear the uncertainty which attends all artistic professions, while her religious instincts dreaded the perils to which the neophytes of Art are exposed. She confided her fears to the head-master of the Royal College of St. Louis, of which the boy was a scholar, and he quieted her with an assurance that did not prove prophetic. "Do not be alarmed, Madame, your son's career is quite mapped out—he will become a professor; he has the bump of Greek and Latin."

Some time afterwards, this same head-master, who was both conscientious and intelligent, felt some scruples about the observation he had made, and resolved to subject the lad to a trial. "You want to be a musician," he said to him; "but are you capable of even writing a piece of music?" "I shall try, sir," said Charles composedly. "Well; here are some words, put them to music." The words happened to be those of the celebrated song in Méhul's *Joseph.*

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After play-hours, the pupil brought to his master a melody with piano accompaniment. When he had sung and played it, the worthy man shook him warmly by the hand, saying cordially, "Certainly, my boy, you will be a musician—you are one already."

This piece of music has been preserved in Gounod's family, and, I believe, published in a collection of melodies. Nothing can be more touching than the freshness, purity, and tender grace of this juvenile inspiration, which was, so to speak, the passport to his musical career.

He was still deep in "the Humanities," not allowing music to interfere with them. Gounod is an accomplished classical scholar. As Barbier, his old friend and collaborator, has said, he is only to be compared to a keyboard of excessive scope and sonority. His remarkable brain can conceive and compass all things. A member of his family who professes boundless admiration for him, declares that he could as easily have been a great painter, a great poet, or a great saint, as a great composer. Whether this judgment be correct or not, it is certain that Gounod's childhood and youth bear no resemblance to those of the artists whom legends represent as possessed by the demon of their art, to the exclusion of all the culture and learning required of civilized man. He was even less like the unruly geniuses who break

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through all trammels and whose unbridled nature endures no restraint. Eager at his work, obedient to his mother whom he worshipped, and to his masters whom he respected, attentive and intelligent, the future great man was at school what is somewhat scornfully called in French, "*Un fort en thème*," and he has had no cause to regret this. Still the artistic vocation was growing stronger every day. At eighteen he had successfully gone through the classical curriculum; it was then felt that no opposition could any longer restrain him, and when the classes of the Royal Conservatoire of Music re-opened in 1836 they counted one pupil more.

He studied counterpoint with Halévy, and practical composition with Lesueur and Paër. It would be vain to inquire what influence the authors of *La Juive*, *Les Bardes*, and *Le Maître de Chapelle* may have exercised upon Gounod, for it was absolutely none. He asked and received from them merely scholastic training. It was by studying the masters, and not by the lessons of his professors, that he connected himself with his predecessors. He interrogated Palestrina, Bach, and Mozart; their august shades answered him, and from their dialogues with the youthful genius his inspiration came.

In 1837 Gounod competed for the Great Prize of Rome; the subject of the *cantata* was "Mary Stuart and Rizzio." He divided the

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second prize with Louis Chollet, who has since become a distinguished pianist; this is an honorary reward, which confers on the receiver neither the pension nor the sojourn at the Villa Medici. The second year he failed for the higher prize, the only one he could compete for on a second trial; it was carried off by Charles Dancla, now professor of the violin at the same Conservatoire. *Quantum mutatus ab illo.* . . . Far from being injurious to young artists, these delays are favourable; the blossoming of talent, like that of flowers, is more perfect when it is not forced. Gounod does not believe in the desiccating influence of the school; the pedagogue is a hateful but necessary evil; he sterilizes only the barren soil. For a robust brain, intellectual athletics are wholesome. The dangers of these public competitions is, on the contrary, that they prematurely emancipate minds as yet unprepared to decide on their future course, and all the more inclined to believe themselves omniscient that their education is imperfect, and that a lucky chance alone has made them triumph over rivals who are frequently better grounded and more happily gifted. Gounod lost nothing by waiting until 1839 before he received the award due to his labours from the Institute.

The English reader is possibly not familiar with the organization of the Academy of France

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in Rome, and a short account of its foundation and purpose may not be inopportune here. In France, where the State is the guardian of all things, Art seeks the sanction of the Government of to-day, as in times past it sought the patronage of princes. Whether this be for good or evil needs not to be discussed here. However, the unchallenged artistic supremacy of France at the present time apparently justifies the system. Less than ever does Art now support a man ere long years of hard work and many struggles have elapsed, and if penury and privations are indispensable conditions to the development of genius, yet no artist can live without bread.

Whether the great Colbert was actuated by these commonplace considerations, or by ideas of a higher order, when he founded the School of Rome, the result has given solid benefits, at least from a practical point of view. Nevertheless, many of the antiquated laws which rule this venerable institution might advantageously be repealed or reformed, as will be shown when its functions are explained.

Every year a *concours* is opened for painters, sculptors, engravers, and architects, pupils of the School of Fine Arts, and for those of the classes of musical composition at the Conservatoire, admitted to enter the lists after a preliminary elimination following a prepara-

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tory competition. The number of competitors generally averages ten for painting, a trifle less for the three other branches taught at the *École des Beaux Arts*, and five or six for music. Their ages vary from twenty to twenty-five for the latter, from twenty-five to thirty for the others. To each section a prize is allotted, called "*Le Grand Prix de Rome.*" Setting the other classes aside, we have only to consider the musical students. The unfortunate young men admitted to compete are locked up for three weeks, in small dark rooms at the Conservatoire, with the sole companionship of an inkstand and ruled paper; they are not allowed a piano, lest their inspiration should unduly be wafted from one apartment to another; they can receive or communicate with no one until the close of the day, when they are granted an hour of exercise in the courtyard, like convicts. This barbarous treatment is called "*la mise en loge*,"—in cells, would be a more appropriate appellation.

Never has a more absurd idea existed in an administrative brain than the expectation that musical compositions of any value can be executed under such conditions, upon a given subject generally of the most colourless type. Luckily for them, the *cantata* whence they have to derive their inspiration does not require lofty imaginative faculties. Certain

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rhymesters have the speciality of these literary productions to order, which are likewise the subject of a *concours*. These biblical or historical episodes, commonplace legends strangely ill-fitted to lyrical composition, invariably include a prelude, an air for each of the three voices, soprano, tenor, and bass, one or two duets, and a final trio, linked together by phrases of recitative, interspersed with symphonic *hors d'œuvre*, constituting a perfunctory and vulgar subject, poetry to match, with symmetrical developments, and foregone conclusions. Love plays but a small part, and fancy is sedulously excluded; it is a school task, something like a Greek theme, in which the scholar strives to avoid all solecisms or barbarisms, and to employ all the elegance he has picked up during his classical studies. Under these conditions the incarceration of the body but slightly aggravates the imprisonment of the imagination.

When this task is ended, and their gaol opened, the poor birds condemned to sing in a cage are brought up for judgment before the musical section of the Academy of Fine Arts, composed of six members, who are at the present time MM. Ambroise Thomas, Gounod, Reyer, St. Saëns, Massenet, and Delibes; the first being the director of the Conservatoire, the two last, professors of musical composition at the same institution. The *cantata* is next executed before

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the five assembled sections in full sitting, whose vote decides the result of the competition. The submitting of a musical work, in which workmanship takes a higher place than imagination, to the verdict of painters, sculptors, and architects is senseless. It is true, that by a fair system of compensation, the musicians are called upon to pronounce in turn on the technical merit of pictures, statues, engravings, and architectural plans presented by the pupils of the *Beaux Arts*. This is an absurdity—but it is tradition; and in revolutionary France it is easier to overthrow a Government than to uproot an error sanctioned by custom.

Another faulty side of the *concours* is that the *cantata*, being written only for voices and piano, one of the most important elements for estimating the real value of a competitor, namely, the science of instrumentation, is wanting. Granted that technical knowledge only is under consideration, this objection is serious. But on the whole, taking the *Grand Prix de Rome* for what it is worth, that we must not regard it as a patent of genius or even talent is a foregone conclusion, if we remember how many successful candidates have sunk into and remained in complete obscurity. This result is not to be deplored, for with an average of one a year, we should be overrun with eminent composers, even without reckoning those who flourish and grow

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outside the Government hot-bed. The *Grand Prix* should be regarded as a final diploma at the close of the scholastic term, a certificate of aptitude, stating that the recipient has learnt all that can be taught in the classes of the school, that he is fairly equipped for the fight, that he possesses the necessary tools for the practice of his trade. He has been invested with the *toga virilis;* it now remains for him to rid himself of scholastic trammels, to fashion his hands by labour, his mind by thought; henceforth he has nothing to ask of others, he must draw on his own resources, and study the Masters.

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CHAPTER III.

Gounod in Rome—The Academy of Rome—Intellectual development of an artist—Gounod's love of the Eternal City—Early compositions—He devotes himself to the study of Palestrina and great Church counterpoint—His first Mass—Stay at Vienna—The Requiem of St. Charles—Acquaintance with Mendelssohn and Schumann—Return to Paris—Religious vocation—The seminary—Triumph of the musical vocation and return to the world.

THE advantages which the gaining of the Grand Prix de Rome affords to budding celebrities are well known. The winner receives an annual pension of 4000 francs (160*l.*) during four years, beginning from the 1st of January following the *concours*, under the following conditions. He must remain unmarried so long as he is a pensioner of the State; he is bound to send one important composition each year to the Institute, which is discussed by the perpetual secretary of the Academy of Fine Arts, in a report afterwards published; he must remain in residence at the Villa Medici for a stated time, the minimum being fixed at two years for musicians, and his stay there must be followed by travelling studies in Germany. Painters, sculptors, and architects remain

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longer at the Villa, and generally go to Greece before returning to Paris.

A prolonged residence in a country which is the cradle of their art is justifiable in the case of the latter class of laureates, because the museums, galleries, and monuments are inimitable models of the beautiful in every form, but this is not the case as regards musicians; and the tradition so far as they are concerned is, and has long been, severely criticized by many of them.

The opinion of Hector Berlioz might not be conclusive, for the author of *Les Troyens* has spent most of his time and talent in abusing everything and everybody; but on this point he agrees with M. St. Saëns and with Georges Bizet, the latter of whom does not appear to have derived much profit from an enforced stay in the Eternal City. Others, differently constituted, think otherwise, and Gounod himself argues against the anti-Roman opposition. In an article of the *Nouvelle Revue* of January 1st, 1887, already quoted, he treats this question as a musician, and says,—

"One of the objections is that a great number of eminent artists have not been trained at the School of Rome; I admit this, and hasten to add that having been there does not always confer superiority. But what is the conclusion? That Rome has not miraculously bestowed what

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Nature had withheld? It would indeed be too convenient to purchase genius at the cost of a journey which all may take. But that is not the question. Given an artistic organization, does not Rome exercise an undeniable influence on such an one in all that concerns sublimity of thought and artistic development?

"Can we believe that the whole artist is in the technique of his art? that handiwork is art? May not an accomplished performer be a second-rate artist? or a consummate rhetorician an orator without fire? Are eloquence and craft identical? Is there no difference between man and his instrument? People forget that in the artisan lives the artist, and that it is the artist who must be discovered, illuminated, transfigured, until he becomes the passionate worshipper of that incorruptible beauty which is not the fleeting success of an hour, but the eternal triumph of masterpieces that will for ever delight the senses of humanity, enlightening the world from the remotest antiquity to the Renaissance, to the present era and after us,—always and for all time. Who ignores or feigns to ignore the unchanging laws of assimilation and nutrition that govern the development of every organism? If the musician requires nought but music to develop and perfect his talent, I shall not only ask, why he is sent to Rome to gaze on the frescoes of Raphael and

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Michael Angelo in the Vatican—the temple of all oracles—but I shall ask, what avails him to read Homer, Virgil, Tacitus, Juvenal, Dante and Shakespeare, Molière and La Fontaine, Bossuet and Pascal, and all the great foster-fathers of human speech and human thought? This is not music. No—but it is Art, ancient and modern Art, immortal and universal Art, and from it the *artist*, not the *artisan*, must derive his sustenance, draw his strength, his ideas, and his life.

"And can the inestimable advantages of such a retreat be too highly praised, the calm security apart from the feverish turmoil and the constant solicitude of ordinary existence? the silence in which one learns to listen to the inner hidden voices, the profound solitudes, the distant horizon whose majestic lines seemed to retain the magic power of lifting the mind to the altitude of the colossal events of which they were witnesses? And the Tiber, with its troubled waters mingling the terror of the crimes that stained them with blood with the sublime tranquillity of the Roman Campagna through which they flow? And Rome itself, the threefold Rome, which has received from the hands of centuries the august tiara encircling the forehead of its supreme Pontiff, and sheds on the Universe the ever-undimmed light of Eternal Truth? What a centre, what a plane,

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what an atmosphere for him who knows how to feel, to ponder and to muse !

" Let us therefore keep at any price that grand School of Rome whose records bear such names as David, Ingres, Flandrin, Regnault, Duret, Hérold, Halévy, Berlioz, Bizet ; these do not, methinks, deserve the arrogant pity which endeavours to underrate a dynasty with a century behind it. Let us with all our energy defend the hallowed resort that has so long sheltered the growth of the young artist, guarded him against the premature pressure of life's necessities, and protected him against both the suggestions of the spirit of trade and the vulgar triumph of an evanescent popularity without dignity and without grandeur."

Faithful to the predilections of his youth, Gounod still talks with enthusiasm of the three years he passed at the Villa Medici. Rome ! . . . The name should be written in capitals and followed by a whole line of notes of exclamation to convey the sound of his voice when he utters it. Rome !—Palestrina and the Sistine Chapel, the *Last Judgment* and the *Dispute of the Blessed Sacrament*, the Campagna with its melancholy distances, the aqueducts of Claudius, and the blue Sabine Mountains ! Rome ! initiation into the Beautiful in every form, Poetry, Love, Light ! " To see," says Gounod, " is to enjoy. Future life will be nothing more than universal

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vision, and Rome gives us a terrestrial foresight of that vision."

The Eternal City of 1840 was not that of to-day. It was Pontifical Rome, the capital of Christendom, with countless churches and convents reared on the ruins of Paganism, where the gorgeous processions of the Holy Week passed over the sepulture of Olympian gods, where the ashes of the first martyrs mingled with the dust of ages; the stupendous city where a dead civilization threw its glorious shadow over the paling lustre of a falling power—the city of the Cæsars and the Popes, infinitely more poetical and majestic than the vulgar capital of a constitutional State, fashioned after the caprices of modern politics.

There, under the myrtles and laurels of the Academy of France, the vague and lovely dreams that haunt the brain of youth and genius took form and shape; there Gounod wrote some of his best melodies, *Le Vallon* and *Le Soir*, the noble and pure setting of Lamartine's verse; *Ma belle amie est morte*, the poetical lament inspired by the lines of Théophile Gautier; there he found the enchanting phrase of "the garden," that he gives us in the duet of *Faust*. What he owes to Rome, however, is not the imagination which was innate in him, and would have come forth anywhere, but his exhaustive knowledge of the masterpieces of sacred music, towards which he

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was inclined by the mysticism of his nature ; it is his intimate communion with Palestrina, whose austerity did not repel him, because he had the ardent faith of the neophyte both in art and in religion. He fervently devoted himself to the arduous works of the great counterpointist during his stay in Rome, and it was there that Gounod acquired the science of construction, the ease in the manipulation of parts, the dexterity and freedom of hand, which make the great musician. There is no intellectual gymnastic more strengthening than those studies ; it hardens the muscles and supples the joints, it enriches the blood and quiets the nerves, it clothes the artist in an armour which can defy all the practical difficulties of his craft.

The first important work of Gounod's is a Mass after the method of Palestrina, which was performed in 1841 at Rome in the Church of *St. Louis des Français.* It remained unpublished and the MS. is preserved in the library of the Conservatoire of Paris. Nearly half a century later, taking up the chain which had so long ago linked the young beginner to the old Roman master, Gounod, having reached the apogee of his fame, returned to his earlier tendencies, and wrote a hieratic Mass to the memory of Joan of Arc, of which more will be said when his religious music is examined. The interval

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between these two compositions was fully employed.

After Rome and Palestrina, Gounod studied Germany and Johann Sebastian Bach. He remained nine months in Vienna, working hard in his small room on the fourth floor of a *bourgeois* boarding-house, poring over the masters and "living upon counterpoint," as he says, without allowing the fascinating Viennese ladies to wean him from his beloved labours. On the day of All Souls in 1842 he had a *Requiem* Mass executed in the Church of St. Charles, which had been composed and rehearsed in six weeks. He still keeps lovingly the little old yellow score with his observations added after the performance. It may be noted here that his musical handwriting, delicate, neat and elegant, has remained absolutely the same during forty-five years. As to his ordinary hand, although it has now suffered a little from constant use, its character is not materially altered.

Above the heading of the "*Sedisti lassus*" he wrote: "Mendelssohn has done me the honour to write to me that this piece might be signed Cherubini." Gounod remembered this praise, and introduced the melody in *Mors et Vita* with the same counterpoint. He did the same with *Lux Eterna*, which is one of the finest parts in his grand oratorio. On the margin he has written in German: "*O heiliger Fra Angelico,*

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wo ist die Musik deiner Engeln?" ("Holy Fra Angelico, where is the music of thy angels?") Who can say that it is useless for the musician to contemplate fine painting?

The theme of the *Dies Iræ* is not unknown to the modern public—it is the desperate appeal of Marguerite to divine pity. The whole *Requiem* was highly appreciated by connoisseurs. The critic Becker, himself a distinguished composer, who was shot by the command of General Windischgraetz during the sedition in Vienna in 1848—appraised the author in the following terms: "This young man possesses a power of imagination and a personal intensity which are extremely rare in this day."

The approbation of Mendelssohn was more encouraging than any other to the young Frenchman. Availing himself of a letter of introduction sent to him from Paris by Madame Henschel, the sister of the illustrious composer, he went to Leipzig to deliver it, and was cordially received. The monument erected in the Church of St. Thomas to the memory of Johann Sebastian Bach, who a century before had been *Cantor* (which meant "director of song") in this small church, had just been unveiled. The ardent disciple of Palestrina, accompanied by the author of *Paulus*, resorted thither like a pilgrim. The elder musician sat down at the organ on which the fingers of the great Master of Masters had so

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often lingered, and improvised a paraphrase of a celebrated choral, in old style, for the benefit of his young friend. Gounod has ever retained an affectionate memory of Mendelssohn, and pays a just tribute of admiration to his genius, but he never was in any way influenced by him. There existed no point of contact between these two admirable, but totally divergent, artistic organizations, between the scholastic rigidity of the Berlin composer, and the ardent impetuosity of his French brother artist.

At that time there was living in Germany another maestro whose fame has since penetrated into France, but who was in 1843 as unknown there as the most esteemed musicians of the court of Pekin now would be—Robert Schumann. It is generally believed, and has been repeated by all writers upon Gounod's youth, that he was at first sight fascinated by the German musician's robust and original genius. Not only does he deny this, but he declares that he never experienced for Schumann the intellectual sympathy that arises from the mystic affinity of two minds. He recognizes and values his talent, but his admiration is the effect of reasoning, not of the spontaneous attraction which springs from artistic consanguinity. It is hardly credible that he should have fallen unconsciously under Schumann's ascendancy. Gounod is too shrewd,

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his habit of analysis is too inveterate for self-deception; he cannot err in judging of the external circumstances that have acted on his artistic temperament. Admitting that one personality cannot exert any influence over another unless there exists at the same time a distinct harmony and analogy between their natures, Schumann and Gounod not being in these conditions, the latter would not be influenced by the former. The error has been committed by those who were deceived by a certain conformity of mystic and archaic tendencies, which is merely accidental, but not substantially real.

After a stay in Berlin, Gounod left Germany (unwitting that it was the country destined to do so much for his fame by adopting *Faust* after it had been disowned and scorned by his ungrateful fatherland), and returned to Paris. This was a period of his life during which he passed through a moral crisis upon which it is not becoming to linger, for it is connected with those secrets of the soul that should be sacred from curiosity or criticism. It is well known that on his return from Germany the young artist was again possessed by the religious mysticism which Rome had fostered in him; he believed himself called to a sacerdotal vocation. He owns that what irresistibly attracted him to the Church was the

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character of comforter which it confers on the Roman Catholic confessor. To restore Christian peace to a wounded soul, to dispel remorse by divine forgiveness, and soothe the anguish of repentant sinners, seemed to him the most sublime mission to which a human being could aspire, and he prepared himself for holy orders.

But a rival and equally potent spirit was watching. While studying theology in the School of the Carmelites, the young man remained *maître de chapelle* and organist at the Foreign Missions; this imprudence showed that he had not yet achieved a complete self-sacrifice. Art held him back before he had taken the last irrevocable step; the neophyte hesitated for a while between the two vocations, apparently so opposed to each other that it appears incredible that each could exercise an equally powerful attraction upon him. It might be supposed that his mother, in her fervent piety, attempted at one time to incline the scales towards priesthood—but this was not the case. Madame Gounod's strong common sense was alarmed at the possible consequences for her son if he committed himself to a course from which there is no retreating; she felt that his ardent nature and fiery imagination were dangerous qualities in the life of renunciation and obedience he contemplated. It was, there-

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fore, her influence which prevailed on the young man to abandon the heroic life of sacerdotal renunciation, and cast aside the postulant's garb. But Gounod has retained from the time he passed on the steps of the altar a profoundly religious mind, enlarged by contact with the world, but essentially earnest, a biblical and theological erudition rarely met with in a layman; and last, not least, a profound love of sacred music. The "Abbé Gounod," as he was then called, had never ceased to cultivate this art during the period of his religious novitiate. Other occupations diverted him for a while from this exclusive predilection, but he eagerly returned to it thirty years later.

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Part III.

FIRST PERIOD OF GOUNOD'S LYRICAL CAREER.

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CHAPTER I.

Pauline Viardot—Young Gounod introduced to her—Composes his first opera for her—First success in London—Concert of sacred music at St. Martin's Hall—Notice in the *Athenæum*—*Sappho* at the Paris Opera—Weakness of the libretto—The *stanzas*—The Goatherd's Song.

It was about this time that Gounod became acquainted with the woman who had the distinction of being, as he says himself, "the godmother of his career." The name of Pauline Viardot is as popular in England as in France; she speaks English, also German, Spanish and Italian, with perfect purity, and has so often been heard in London that a long biography of her is unnecessary. A daughter of the celebrated Garcia, the singing master *par excellence*, the jealous guardian of the wholesome traditions of Italian vocalization, she had been trained in the best school, and was gifted with an artist's soul and imagination. Less richly endowed with physical means than her illustrious sister, Madame Malibran, Pauline's powerful voice was wanting in suppleness, softness, and melting sweetness, but she covered those defects, and more than atoned for them, by her consummate skill in vocalization, a rare understanding of her art, the purity of her

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diction, the elevation of her style, and the force of her dramatic feeling. Her "creations" are not forgotten; she has never been equalled in the part of Fidès in *Le Prophète.* The pathetic style of Gluck's muse specially suited her talent, and she has brilliantly revived the heroic characters of *Alkestis* and *Orpheus.*

One of her greatest merits is that she always invested her part with a conscientious severity of style. The rock on which so many artists founder is that they listen too much to their own voice, and sacrifice all else to music. To mention one only—a great artist, but more especially a great virtuoso, Monsieur Faure, who, like Mme. Viardot belongs to the past, as both have left the stage—notwithstanding his careful acting, he always impressed the audience with his consciousness of the witchery of his voice; in his vocal efforts he seemed to forget the character he represented. Baritone parts, of all others, require at times a certain force and roughness incompatible with an excess of refinement in singing, and demand, certainly not a lesser, but another kind of art.

Having received from nature a fine contralto voice of great compass, Madame Viardot was condemned to exacting and solemn parts, but in her inflexible artistic probity she never once sacrificed the character to misplaced subtilties. She considers that the singing must be subor-

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dinate to dramatic action, or in other words, that the former is the means and the latter the end.

It does not enter into the scope of this work to comment on Wagner's famous formula ; it may, however, be said that, thoroughly understood and properly applied, it should be the law of lyrical composition as well as of execution. If it aroused such a storm of opposition, it was for want of being adequately interpreted. It was regarded as an intentional undervaluing of music, while the Maestro of Bayreuth never entertained so sacrilegious a thought. But no one can dispute that music only attains its full value when it expresses an idea, and in dramatic music the idea is the drama ; it is the body, the music is the garment, and a garment must be cut to the size of the body, not the reverse. This is what Wagner meant, or at least what must be understood by a system of which, after all, he was not the inventor. Human logic requires that it should be so. Song, a rhythmical and modulated recitation, is likewise only the ornament, the clothing of dramatic action, whence it draws its inspiration. The duty of the singer is to conform conscientiously to the spirit of the character and the situation, even if the vocal effect has to be sacrificed. Madame Viardot has always acted on this principle, and that alone would have been sufficient to rank her with the greatest artists.

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When Gounod re-entered the world, Pauline Viardot was at the zenith of her talent and reputation. Her artistic position had been won, not only in Paris, but in the whole of Europe, and was unrivalled. All-powerful at the Opera, courted by every celebrity of her day, reigning supreme over the musical world, she had to pay her tribute to fame, in the shape of the solicitors and intruders who besieged her door. Unknown beardless composers haunted her, with their long hair, inspired eyes, awkward shyness, a letter of introduction in their pocket, and a bulky manuscript under their arm. She was compelled at last, in self-defence, pitilessly to shut them all out. A female friend, however, urged her to make an exception in favour of a young musician whose extraordinary talent entitled him to some recognition on her part. She had so often heard similar praise and recommendations, that she merely laughed at the exaggeration. But one day the friend brought the young man without warning; Madame Viardot had no way of escape, and submitted. Gounod, for it was he, sat down at the piano and began to sing. I have told how he sings even now, what must it have been then? He sang *Le Vallon*, and *Le Soir* and *Venise*, and other songs, his hostess never attempting to stop him; she no longer pondered how she might dismiss the *débutant* with

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a few vaguely polite words; she was captivated by the powerful and elegant music, with its striking personality and the unmistakable inspiration of a highly emotional soul. From that moment the great prima donna conceived for Gounod an affection which is the greatest boon for a man of talent to inspire at the opening of his career in a woman of supreme merit and noble heart.

Gounod was at that time in great sorrow and distress. His brother Urbain, whom he dearly loved, had just died, and his mother was nearly blind. He lived in an atmosphere of sadness, which might have proved fatal to his mind, had not Madame Viardot taken him to hand. She persuaded him to come with her in England, where she was engaged for a series of performances, then to visit her at her country house in the neighbourhood of Paris, charming away his melancholy, taking him into the society of useful and intelligent people, and clearing the way for his ambition. She did more. When she had to renew her engagement at the Opera, she made it one of the conditions of renewal, that within a stated time a work by the young composer should be produced. Nestor Roqueplan was too anxious to keep his star not to yield to her caprice, and the clause was inserted. Henceforth Gounod's future was assured. He belonged to the world.

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Having entered into relations with Emile Augier, whom he had met in Madamè Viardot's salon, he immediately began to work on a poem written by the dramatist; it was his first lyrical composition, not unworthy of the later ones, for which he always retained a secret predilection, perhaps because it opened for him the path to fame. *Sappho*, an opera in three acts, of which the principal part devolved on the prima donna to whom he owed his good fortune, was rapidly concluded. Gounod has always been gifted with a wonderful faculty of work, which, as he is never guilty of carelessness, bears witness to the vivacity and the sureness of his touch. The character of the music itself indicates this quality; it flows freely like a limpid and generous stream.

Gounod's *début* in lyrical composition dates from the 16th of March, 1851. Even during the rehearsals of *Sappho*, rumour was busy with his name. But it is in England that the first triumphant peal told the world of the birth of one of the greatest musicians of our era. On the 13th of January of the same year, four of his compositions were played with great success at St. Martin's Hall, and the *Athenæum* of the 18th contained a highly eulogistic article on the performance, from which the following are extracts :—

". . . Within our critical experience we

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do not recollect any first appearance under parallel circumstances. The first execution of music, new in style, by an untried composer, totally unknown to fame, in the presence of an audience entirely strange, and largely made up of musicians and of artists, home and foreign, very few of whom by any possibility could have any partiality for a total stranger, made up a case of ordeal at once more sudden and severe than most recorded in the history of Art. The success was decided, and, as was said by a veteran musician near us, more habituated to listen than to praise, marks the commencement of a new career in music."

"The 'Libera me'—from a Requiem—is severe, dignified and solemn, with a combination of voices on the gentler verse '*Requiem sempiternam*' which is at once new, stately and impressive. The 'Sanctus' from a Mass—a longer and more important composition—is the work by which M. Gounod's success was assured. In its ordinance and treatment this 'Sanctus' is original and beautiful. It commences with a *solo* for the tenor, the first strain of which is repeated by the orchestra, the chorus being merely subordinate. Then comes the second part of the *solo;* after which an admirably-contrived *crescendo* leads back to the original theme, delivered with a pompous and jubilant *fortissimo*, for which the nave of St. Peter's at Rome

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would not be too large. To this succeeds a short, clear and massive fugue, on the 'Hosanna.' The 'Benedictus' is treated in the old style of ecclesiastical chant for *soprano solo* with organ only, the strain being afterwards repeated in chorus: the composition winding up with the usual return to the 'Hosanna,' strengthened on its repetition by increase of force in the orchestra. To return to the melodic ideas of this work;—we recollect no melody simpler and sweeter in *cantilena* or loftier in its tone than that of the 'Sanctus.' With a fulness of symmetrical beauty justifying the old poets' epithet of 'ravishing,' is combined a devotional fervour and dignity which render the strain totally inapplicable to any secular purpose. We are not reminded of any other composer, ancient or modern, by form, phrase, or chord. The music is not new, if 'new' is to mean either flimsy or ugly—the music is not old, if to be 'old' is to be harsh and formal, to exhibit the hard scaffolding of science behind which no beautiful structure exists. It is neither more nor less than the work of a thoroughly trained artist—and, what is more, the poetry of a new poet.

"The last composition was secular—'Peter the Hermit'—a bass *solo*, with Crusaders' march and chorus. This is no less remarkable, after its kind, as a specimen of large and noble

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melody and brilliant effect. The ease with which this composition is conducted, and the flow with which the stately march passes on till a *crescendo* is attained of the uttermost power and triumph, would of themselves suffice to separate M. Gounod from the world of experimental musicians who are embarrassed how to carry on or to complete a movement without stops, spasms, or episodical deformities,—while the colour and form of the work are no less decisive as to the command over dramatic force and colour possessed by its writer. The orchestra is handled with freedom, picturesque variety, and mastery, in few cases chargeable with the besetting fault of a young composer, namely, a surcharge of instruments,—the result of which must always be effect wasted. We augur a career of no ordinary interest for M. Gounod, since, if there be not in these works of his a genius at once true and new, we must go to school again and learn the vocabularies of art and of criticism afresh."

The last words were prophetic, and if, as there is every reason to believe, the anonymous critic was M. Viardot, it proves that friendly articles are not always mendacious. Copied and commented upon by the Parisian press, the notice of the *Athenæum* produced a controversy which attracted public attention to the author of *Sappho*. However, in spite of these

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favourable circumstances, of the great beauties of the work, and of the excellence of its interpreters, the performance only obtained a *succès d'estime.* An account given at the time concludes with these words : " This opera will win for M. Gounod the sympathy of artists and a discreet fame that will enable him to try his luck a second time with better chances of success." It may be that the opera would have triumphed over the indifference of the public had not the performances been interrupted after the eighteenth night by the departure of Madame Viardot for her London season. Reduced (and disfigured) to one act, it was later on played as curtain-raiser to a ballet with second-rate singers. Gounod, however, soon repented of this concession, and withdrew it, preferring to keep his score untouched in his desk rather than to see it mutilated on the stage.

Translated into Italian, *Sappho* was acted in various theatres beyond the Alps. On the 31st of March, 1884, the opera reappeared in Paris, the heroine being one of the finest " creations " of Madame Krauss. The word is here purposely used, as for the present generation it was almost a new work. In order to save an opera of Gounod's from the indignity of accompanying a ballet in the bills, the manager had conceived the unfortunate idea of strengthening the somewhat weak libretto by adding another act, and

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making it last the whole evening. The venture was not a success. In a work of art nothing is so good as the primitive form; it may be, if necessary, reduced, but it is always fatal to enlarge it, and especially in this case, the plot could not bear any further development. Very likely too Emile Augier had not treated it so cleverly as he might have done, which only shows how special the talent of the librettist is, and that the most brilliant author may fail when he attempts that line. Whatever the cause may have been, the result was anything but satisfactory; the added numbers suffered from the lack of inspiration, and they hampered the original version, so that, notwithstanding a sufficiently flattering series of representations, the real success of the opera was not so great as on its earlier production, the most applauded portions, such as the finale of the first act, which in 1851 was always encored, falling flat. In consequence of a disagreement between Gounod and his publisher, Choudens, the proprietor of the score, the new music has never been printed, so that the published opera exists only in its old form.

Although not particularly suitable to a lyric drama, the subject of *Sappho* had already inspired several German and Italian composers and two artists in France, one possessing remarkable talent, and the other not devoid of merit,

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Martini and Reicha. Completely forgotten now, the opera of Martini, represented in 1794, had been highly praised. In his attempt to improve the barren plot of a handsome young man renouncing the love of a woman of genius, and preferring a commonplace beauty, Emile Augier has distorted the legend without strengthening the action. The patriotic element introduced by him under the obscure shape of a purposeless conspiracy, the awkward stratagem by which the artful Glycère separates Phaon from the illustrious poetess, in defiance of tradition, are fatal mistakes. Nothing on the stage is less interesting and more suggestive of ridicule than a man over whom two women wrangle. The part of Glycère is odious, the character of Pytheas, introduced for the sake of variety in a picture where all should be pathetic, strikes a false comic note. The single figure of *Sappho* shines out luminously from the dull background, and the importance given to her by the composer shows clearly that he clung to her as the only element of interest in the colourless libretto. Let us see what he did with it.

No overture—only an introduction of a religious character. The processional march with a chorus of Apollo's priests is a fine piece in a noble style; it breathes the serene majesty of Grecian paganism. The tenor song contains an agreeable melodious idea, modulated with

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great art and distinction. The entrance of the Lesbian Muse is saluted by a chorus which is effective in its simplicity. Even in the days of his youth, Gounod was engrossed by that importance of detail, without puerility, that ingenious refinement, without affectation, which are the characteristics of his methods. As an instance let us quote the dignified and graceful phrase with which Sappho greets Phaon. One of the author's favourite numbers is the invocation to Jupiter, a chorus of priests, into which the spirit of Gluck seems to have entered. The ode of Alcée is a somewhat pale melody, and the judges of the poetical tournament cannot be too highly commended for giving the prize to Sappho, whose *andante* is the melody composed in Rome on Lamartine's verses, *Le Soir*. The accompaniment alone is different. In the opera it is all in violin and tremolos *all' acuto*, soaring above massive harmonies; a process which I should say has been frequently used by Wagner, were it not invidious to notice even a fleeting similarity between two musicians of such opposite natures. Gounod has not often allowed himself the leisure (indulged in to excess by the Italian school) of making one air serve for various ends; in this case the air is so beautiful that he escapes censure. The *allegro* is only a piece of *fioritura*, brilliant but commonplace, in the style of the old *arie di*

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bravura. The finale of this act is entirely excellent. Simply and solidly constructed, justly proportioned, perfectly balanced, it is particularly noticeable by the chromatic progressions preparing a grand outburst, so often found afterwards in Gounod's works.

The second act is the least good of the three, no doubt because being devoid of any dramatic interest, it did not lend itself to a satisfactory musical development. The duet of Glycère and Pytheas is pleasing enough, but of a doubtful character ; the fault lies chiefly with the libretto, as the composer feels ill at ease in the inopportunely ironical situation ; the same may be said of the duet between the two women ; the situation is too painful, too unpleasant, not to injure the musical inspiration. The *larghetto* of the subsequent trio is written with a fine mournful expression, and has a certain family likeness to some of Verdi's pieces. But a part which deserves to be unreservedly praised is the delightful *cantilena* of Sappho with accompaniment of harps on a long dominant pedal, and its answering chorus of women. Nothing could be finer than this treatment, with its genuinely antique colouring, its exquisite sweetness and serenity.

The third act is the best, and may be safely termed a masterpiece. Perfectly homogeneous, the nobility of style is constantly sustained, and it rises to great pathetic heights. The air of

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Phaon, the chorus of the exiles, *Adieu, Patrie*, the despairing phrase of Sappho, weeping over her own death agony, the *arioso, Sois béni par une mourante*, an admirable and grandly mournful melody, soaring above a pedal movement, sad as a knell—all these different pieces are linked together in logical sequence, till they reach the tragic end of the drama. Gounod has often said that he has never since been given an inspiration equal to that of the eight bars, preceding the voice in the *arioso*, in which the theme is pre-presented by the heart-rending accents of the French horn.

The librettist deserves commendation for having here put back the *dénouement* without letting the action drag, and by so doing given an opportunity for the most exquisite passage of the opera. After her ardent prayer for the ingrate who has forsaken her, Sappho falls fainting on the sands. The last farewell of the exiles embarking for other shores is heard in the distance. Sonorous waves driven by the storm pass over the orchestra, then an abrupt modulation in A major suddenly creates the effect of the sun's rays rending the clouds and illuminating the landscape with radiant light. Gounod himself describes the inspiring intention of this effect in these terms. A half-clad youth appears on the summit of a cliff overhanging the breakers, and sings a delightful melody, the accompaniment of which by two hautboys and a tambourine marking

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the rhythm, recalls those Arabic songs, monotonous as the boundless spaces, and like them eternally serene. Primitive and Arcadian, thyme and lavender scented, its exquisite softness expresses the unconscious joy of living and loving under the warm rays of the sun, a physical satisfaction, untroubled by care and desire. Those few bars, apparently so unimportant, contain the whole of pagan, sensuous, sunny Greece. A friend of the Maestro, who has dwelt on the shores of the Ægean Sea, was saying one day that nothing could give a more accurate idea of the land described by Theocritus in his idyls than the song of the goatherd in *Sappho*, and yet Gounod had never visited Greece, showing once more that the artist paints what he feels rather than what he sees. This song is singularly characteristic of Gounod; it will live for ever because it exactly answers to his own excellent definition of a work of art—"the expression of Truth by Beauty."

This number may be quoted as belonging to those from which sentiment should be rigorously excluded. I cannot refrain from relating here a short anecdote, which illustrates what Gounod means by his oft-repeated warning to artists, "Above all, no sentiment." When *Sappho* was revived in 1884, the episodical part of the young shepherd had been entrusted to a third-rate tenor cast in the company for "utility" parts, and whose conceit was as great as his talent was

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small. He obstinately persevered in infusing into the melody (which he considered as too simple for his own merit) what the author had abstained from putting into it—wrong shading, misplaced intentions, inconsistent vocal effects. In vain did Gounod strive at each rehearsal to impress the obtuse actor with the exact meaning of this hymn of sensuous Pantheism ; desperate at last, he rose to his full height in the little stage box, whence he directed the performance, and half in anger, half in raillery—for his wrath is never very deep—he called out : "My good friend, will you do something for me ? Well, then, sing that air like a dumb brute ? "

The final stanzas, known by all, sang by all, are thrown into strong relief by the contrast they present to the boy's song, which they immediately follow, with no other transition than a magnificently ample recitative. After the anthem to physical life and material enjoyment, we hear the last farewell of a tortured soul, seeking death without fear and without regret, as the end of a pain that even the accents of Sappho's lyre can no longer assuage. The continuous accompaniment of harps, rolling in great waves over the deep subdued notes of the contra-basses, traversed here and there by the broad singing phrases of the quartett, the sinister clash of the cymbals, the lugubrious clamor of the horns, are one and all true and in their appointed place ; with a great sobriety of

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method an effect of powerful pathos is produced. This is a unique passage in the works of the Maestro, for the lofty tragic style is not the one he has finally adopted, and which constitutes his musical individuality. *Sappho's* stanzas evoke the shadow of Gluck, and Gounod alone is now thought of when his music is heard.

How absolutely true that music is subservient to the drama ! Whenever the composer meets with a truly dramatic situation, if his talent is equal to the task, he will find true sounds to render it. The third act of *Sappho* does as much honour to M. Emile Augier as the two first did him little credit, and it will stand as one of the best chapters in the extensive works of Gounod.

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CHAPTER II.

Gounod's Marriage—His second theatrical work—The choruses of *Ulysses* at the Théâtre Français—He is Grecian without being Pagan—He directs a choral society—Two symphonies—La *Nonne Sanglante* at the Opera—Eleven performances only.

THE indefatigable Master who for forty years has pursued his fruitful career, had taken his first giant strides. From that day his compositions followed each other at close intervals, as might have been expected from an artist who loves work, and is gifted with prodigious powers of production. One year after the appearance of *Sappho* he married. His wife, as I have already said, was one of the daughters of Zimmerman, a Professor at the Conservatoire, and one of the most remarkable pianists of the time. He allied himself with a family of artists; one of his sisters-in-law was Madame Dubuffe, wife of the first and mother of the second painter of that name.

A few months after his marriage he produced another theatrical piece. The poet Ponsard, attempting to revive the antique Greek tragedies mixed with song, had written his *Ulysses* for the *Théâtre Français;* Gounod composed the musical parts, numbering fifteen concerted pieces and

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several episodical symphonies. The innovation had but a moderate success with a public wedded to routine, who incessantly clamour for new artistic formulas, who pretend they want to break the old moulds and yet who are frightened by the slightest deviation from old habits.

The idea, however, was not absolutely novel; the *Athalie* of Racine had been conceived on a similar plan, the exquisite lines of the choruses having been successively set to music by J. B. Moreau, Lulli, and Mendelssohn. But the public had forgotten all this. Since then a second attempt of the same kind has been made by MM. Alphonse Daudet and the late Georges Bizet. The cold reception given by Paris to their joint masterpiece is well known, and also that after a ten years' struggle only it was at last hailed and prized at its just value. Encouraged by the ultimate success of *L'Arlésienne*, the intelligent and artistic manager of the Odéon, M. Porel, who has worked so hard to popularize Shakespeare in France, revived *Athalie* with Mendelssohn's choruses, and attracted large audiences. If a suggestion to that effect may be offered, there is little doubt that were these two plays performed in London, they would have a great success. Racine's tragedy is familiar to all educated people, and the rustic drama of M. Daudet can be appreciated by all in spite of its strong local colour. As for the musical accompaniment of

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both plays, which is probably known to the English public in its isolated form, it would gain considerably by being presented in so ornate a frame.

It may be that some day a French manager will decide upon reviving the joint work of Ponsard and Gounod. The dramatic portion is well-nigh forgotten, and the music, rarely executed at concerts, is hardly known to the general public. It is difficult to say whether the enterprise would prove remunerative, but the intrinsic value of the choruses — perhaps too numerous not to hamper the tragedy—is very great. Greece has been favourable to Gounod. By the ingenious application of original rhythmical effects and uncommon modulations, he succeeded in obtaining a singularly interesting local atmosphere, and in dexterously lending the desirable variety to a subject in itself monotonous.

In the first act there is a chorus of Naiads, replete with graceful expression, leaving the impression of a smooth, watery, crystalline expanse of humid transparent greenness. The chorus of the swineherds in the next act also deserves mention. The theme, of frank and robust coloration, successively presented by the basses and the tenors, and finally taken up by both in a great sonorous *ensemble*, is developed by a heroic accompaniment broken by the clamour

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of the French horns ultimately throwing in their tonic and dominant notes. The chorus of the faithless handmaidens of Penelope opening the third act :—

"Voici l'heure ténébreuse,
L'heure du plaisir ;
Voici la nuit amoureuse,
Propice au désir,"

has been popularized by an arrangement for two voices, published later on in a collection of the Master's duets. The melody, with its serpentine evolutions and caressing accents, sustained by delicate harmonies and a continuous ornamentation by the first violins, mingling with occasional sighs from the flute, is amorously cradled by a rhythm charged with morbidezza. The antistrophe sung by the faithful maidens is in a grandly-severe style. In the fourth act unstinted applause must be given to the chorus of the banquet, and especially to the conclusion, a noble *finale* led up to by the consecutive entrance of the tenors, basses, and female voices, reproducing with equal truth and charm pagan gaiety dancing on light-coloured marbles, to the shrill slender sound of the flute and tambourine. Rare elegance is the character of the whole work, combined with perfect refinement and exquisite grace ; but it appeals only to elevated taste, and it has up to the present time met with indifference from the general public. It is, however, full time that tardy justice should be done to this delightful score.

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In this same year (1852) Gounod assumed the direction of an Orpheonic Society in Paris. His keen taste for grand choral music found ample satisfaction in the labours this task entailed, and he only abandoned it in 1860, after *Faust*. He not only superintended the execution of the works of Palestrina and Bach by the members, but wrote choruses for the Society, *motets* and masses for male voices. He was at the same time composing symphonies that were performed at the "Association of Young Artists," one in *D*, and another in *E* flat, and these were highly praised by connoisseurs. But the musician had been tempted by the demon of the stage, and, unable to resist the witchery of his suggestions, he gave himself up almost entirely to dramatic composition. If *Sappho* and *Ulysses* had not brought him a glowing success, his *début* had, nevertheless, been fairly satisfactory, and the interest those works had excited was sufficiently encouraging to justify his persevering in the same course.

On the 18th October, 1854, a new work of Gounod's figured on the bills of the Imperial Academy of Music, *La Nonne Sanglante*, an opera in four acts. The feeble libretto, taken by Scribe from Lewis' novel, "The Monk," after the style of Anne Radcliffe, had been refused in succession by Meyerbeer, Halévy, and Berlioz. The young composer who had the courage to accept the poem showed no small talent

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in making anything at all of it. Side by side with very weak passages, with inadequacy of imagination, excused by the extreme poverty of the plot, this long-forgotten score contains some beautiful passages, reveals dramatic feeling, and shows a considerable advance upon *Sappho* in the science of lyrical effect, while it exhibits the same qualities of refinement, ingenuity, and elegance, without their corresponding defects of affectation and puerility. The orchestration, somewhat too redundant—a common failing of young composers, which is promptly cured by experience—is written by a Master who has already scaled the heights of his art.

These merits, however, did not save the opera, which was represented only eleven times. Success had not yet come to Gounod, who was then in his thirty-sixth year. He was at the age when talent in its full expansion of maturity *must* create a masterpiece, when the artist, hitherto in quest of his aim, must assert himself by a supreme and signal achievement. No time had been lost as yet, and the dazzling revelation of genius by a crucial test was not far distant. Unknown to the world, the masterpiece was already in existence, waiting for the hour of its public unfolding.

With it we enter upon the second period of Gounod's artistic career.

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Part IV.

THE HISTORY OF FAUST.

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CHAPTER I.

Every artist has his masterpiece—Gounod's is unanimously declared to be *Faust*—Necessity of a good libretto—Equilibrium between the drama and symphony—Gounod recognizes this before Wagner, as Gluck and Grétry did before his time—First application of the *leit motiv* by Monteverde in the sixteenth century—Ironical advice of Marcello to young composers—State of French musical art at the time of *Faust's* appearance.

1859 had come, the memorable year which heralded Gounod's imperishable reputation and crowned him a genius.

Before *Faust*, he was "a distinguished musician, a clever artist, whose purity of style, delicacy of taste, and noble inspirations gave promise of a great composer to France." These discreetly flattering qualifications are quoted from a critic of the period.

After *Faust* he was acknowledged to be a man of genius, an illustrious Master, and he will descend to posterity under the name of the "Author of *Faust*."

Artists are pre-eminently nervous, the fatal condition of their special organization, and in consequence, more or less irritable. Among the things peculiarly vexatious to them is the custom of perpetually descanting upon their

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one masterpiece, as if the remainder of their work did not exist, or was only to be viewed with mild condescension. To say the least, this is a tasteless form of evincing admiration. When *Martha* was mentioned to Flotow, the laudatory formulas were invariably showered on "The Last Rose," to the intense mortification of the unfortunate composer, whose only merit as regards this delightful elegiac was that he had picked out and appositely placed the Irish ballad.

A similar aggravation pursued Bizet with the *Habanera* in *Carmen*, a popular Spanish melody of Yradier's, introduced by him in a score of which it is by no means the best part, and rich enough in original inspiration to justify him in disowning the paternity of that particular song.

The stupidity of ignorance is to blame for this. Nevertheless, the public is not always wrong when it becomes infatuated with one especial part of an author's work instead of another which the latter deems superior, perhaps because he has taken more pains with it. Whatever may be the intrinsic worth of each of the elements that make up an artist's reputation, one always asserts itself above the others, and constitutes the unique, the complete, the dominant work. Etymologically speaking the French word *chef-d'œuvre* expresses this—the

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head of the work—and there can be only one head. Whosoever has produced his *capo d'opera* may die in peace with his artistic conscience—he has fulfilled his mission. Better still, however, if he lives on to create other works also to be rich in treasures, and which will survive either partially or as a whole. The supreme perfection of *Don Giovanni* does not prevent *Le Nozze di Figaro* from being an exquisite opera. Less complete, perchance less lucky, *Cosi fan Tutte* has almost vanished from the bills, but even without mentioning the duet of the two women, which is a gem, the delicious quartet "*Tu scrivi mi*" is immortal. Yet Mozart remains to all time the author of *Don Giovanni.*

Partly from a spirit of contradiction and reaction, partly from the unconscious desire of astonishing the world by a personal and original opinion, and perhaps also because the dilettante discovers certain beauties that escape the vulgar ear, he not unfrequently prides himself upon his opposition to the general opinion, and reverses the usual method of classifying the work of the Masters by order of merit. It is not rare to hear those select judges rank *Le Prophète* above *Les Huguenots.* But however disdainful the initiated may show themselves of public taste, it is nevertheless the public who have to be considered, for they are the final judges of the Master, without prejudice or partiality, although

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possibly not in the first instance. The most competent may be misled, but in time a certain settlement takes place, an average of opinion is established, the masterpiece asserts itself, is universally recognized as such, and becomes an article of faith. The *esprits forts* deny it, the casuists dissent, but theirs are only effervescent controversies, intellectual subtleties that do not shake the dogma.

As regards Gounod, the masterpiece in which, as by a supreme affirmation, he has centred all his artistic convictions, is unanimously decreed to be *Faust*. He does not dispute this, although he confesses to his foible for *Roméo et Juliette*. Setting aside musical judgment of it, it is easy to understand that a subject like *Faust* is most favourable to the construction of a complete lyric drama, possessing as it does the two essential conditions of every artistic work—variety in detail, and unity in the whole; while the opera of *Roméo et Juliette* is but a long love duet. Although a great deal of love is required in an opera, it cannot rest wholly on love. And yet a lyric drama does not demand excessive action, for that would stand in the way of the music, abruptly interrupting symphonic developments, and the unfolding of fertile ideas, which, incessantly renewed in form, must be sustained by the composer till he has extracted all the expression of which they are capable; or else the music would paralyze, mutilate

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and adulterate the drama. Therefore a bustling, rapid or sensational libretto inevitably creates a languishing or incoherent opera. The lyric drama chiefly demands situations. The apparently secondary art of the librettist is in reality extremely difficult; the worse than mediocrity of the books submitted to musicians is convincing proof of this, and the weakness of the *collaborateur* is detrimental to the composer. Mozart wrote a masterpiece in *Don Giovanni;* what would he not have done with *Il Flauto Magico* if the plot had been less obscure? And yet Mozart was one of the rare elect in whose hands the vilest metal changes to gold.

It may be objected that the Italians of the first half of the century had only wretched *libretti* to work upon; this, however, did not prevent some of their operas from being extremely pleasing. Yet by a lucky coincidence, if the best operas of that school are examined, it will be found that the authors of *Il Barbiere, Lucia de Lammermoor* and *Rigoletto,* collaborated with Beaumarchais, Walter Scott, and Victor Hugo. Now, more than ever before, the close alliance of music with the drama renders a good poem indispensable to the composer. Our fathers cared little whether Desdemona breathed her despair in cadences and *points d'orgue,* whether the ferocious Lucrezia Borgia exhaled his fury in frantic *gorgheggi,* or whether Norma sighed away her

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love in a bravura air, which might quite as appositely have served for a triumphal march. The sudden happy flashes of these composers, who occasionally had inspirations of genius, atoned for absurdities which shocked but little at the time. St. Augustine had, however, treated the question in that oft-quoted treatise, *De Musica.*

"It may occur that a cadence can please in *contre-temps*, that a lovely voice or a charming dance may excite amusement when the circumstances demand gravity, and in those cases it is an improper use made of a movement good in itself." This is a home thrust to the extravagance of Italian opera from an adversary who knew nothing of modern controversy.

If the perfect equilibrium between tragedy and symphony is not sufficient to constitute the beautiful in music, it tends largely towards it. Gounod has done most among the men of our time to lay down this fundamental law of the musicians' gospel. In so doing he simply carries out the system of Gluck and Grétry, the subordination of music to dramatic action, which is not only its strength but its *raison d'être*, and the fusion of these two elements of lyric drama logically resulting from the primary conception. Wagner has invented nothing, not even the invisible orchestra, the idea having been suggested by Grétry. He has only applied with inflexible

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rigidity a system which is as old as music itself, for the composers of the sixteenth century had instinctive intuition of it, and had attempted its practical application with the insufficient resources at their disposal. Is the original idea of the *leit motiv* not apparent in the operas of Monteverde, who invariably accompanied the same characters with the same instruments, in order to maintain their dramatic identity? Logic is not the exclusive quality of our era; in all times the human mind has yearned for it. Only its power fluctuates, and when that declines too far, a man is opportunely born to restore it. It was in the dim past that the austere psalmist, Benedetto Marcello, gave this ironical advice to young contemporary musicians:—

"The modern composer may misinterpret at will the sense of the words; he need not read the whole poem before setting to work, lest he should frighten away his fancy; and he will not fail to adapt to the situations the themes he has found agreeable to hear. If one consort departs to meet death, the other must remain to sing a merry *ariette*. When the impresario complains of the music, the composer will prove him in the wrong, because he has taken nearly three days to write his opera, and put into it nearly three times the usual number of notes."

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Take the opposite side of the argument, and you have the true principles of lyrical composition. The writer of this pungent sarcasm upon his colleagues was not only the contemporary of Pergolese, but also of a swarm of second-rate composers who produced merely musical platitudes. It was, moreover, at that time a common practice to adapt the same melody to various situations, and to search for flotsam and jetsam among the wreckage of a condemned play. The custom endured till Rossini's time; his fertile fancy did not prevent him from occasionally exercising the art—more suitable to a cook than an artist—of dishing up remnants. Mozart himself did not scruple to do the same, as if he imagined that *Don Giovanni* might throw *Le Nozze di Figaro* into oblivion.

The opera of *Faust* marks so important a stage, not only in the artistic life of its author, but in contemporary musical history, that it cannot be too minutely studied. A conscientious examination of this memorable work will reveal the extent of its creator's genius, and throw light on the transformation that lyric drama has undergone within the last thirty years. The honour of this renovation is due to Gounod—a fact too readily forgotten now that he has been outstripped on the course he cleared. This important factor in his fame has been defined by a new-comer in the ranks of French critics, who

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already occupies an important place among them.

In the *Revue Politique et Littéraire* of November 3rd, 1887, M. René de Récy stated, with as much delicacy of expression as lucidity of ideas, that at the time when Gounod entered the lists, in the middle of the century, French music was dying of cold. Méhul and Boïeldieu had contributed to it; Hérold had died before restoring it to warmth; Halévy had aggravated its condition; Berlioz, who could have performed a cure, had been kept away from the patient on account of his roughness; Félicien David had attempted some successful remedies, but was not strong enough to heal; Auber had struck the last blow. The critic whose opinion is here condensed, praises Victor Massé for having realized how urgent it was to struggle with this state of things; but on that point I no longer agree with him, as I consider the author of *Galathée* as the coldest musician of this period; but what matters? *Ardere et lucere*, says St. Bernard—this should be the motto of every artist. Gounod has made it his. "He who has warmed with his own fire the anemic art whose heart had almost ceased to beat," says M. de Récy, "who has renewed its blood, recreated its flesh and muscles, is that young man who deserted the seminary in 1850, for the greater glory of France; and we must bless Heaven that his priestly proclivities

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were only transient." An old French proverb says that "the convent does not stand still for want of one monk." But for want of Gounod, French music would have run a great risk of passing from life into death, and it would have been a great pity.

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CHAPTER II.

Jules Barbier, Gounod's librettist—*Fausts* before Gounod's—Meyerbeer refuses to put Goethe's poem on the stage—Gounod does not—The quest for a manager—M. Carvalho accepts *Faust* for the Théâtre Lyrique—Delays—Gounod composes *Le Médecin malgré lui.*

A PHILOSOPHY cruel to the unlucky declares that every one has the sum of happiness he deserves. Gounod deserved a great deal, and was indeed fortunate in meeting M. Jules Barbier. It has been shown how first-rate dramatic authors fail in constructing a good libretto; Gounod, who suffered from this mistake in the case of *Sappho*, found a worthy auxiliary in Jules Barbier, and the world knows the offspring of their fertile collaboration. These two names are so inseparably united that it is impossible to speak of the musician without mentioning the dramatist.

M. Barbier is an eminently Parisian personality. Everybody is acquainted with his tall stature, his handsome person, and the delicate fair features with the clear blue eyes that sparkle so brilliantly in animated conversation. He has remained as young and vivacious as Gounod himself, and is equally enthusiastic; he seems

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to have strayed accidentally into our chilly generation, and he is a fitting coadjutor of the master whose locks whiten with the years that do not make his heart grow colder.

About forty years ago, chance brought together the two men whose careers were henceforth to be so closely linked, and whose friendship has never waned, resisting the inevitable "tiffs" to which the excessive nervous susceptibility of artistic natures cannot fail to expose two similar temperaments. Charles Gounod was thirty, and was writing his first opera. Jules Barbier, three years younger, was already known as the author of some light poetry in elegant verse, and of a drama in five acts which was played at the Théâtre Français without great success, but was favourably criticized, owing to its original qualities. Thanks to his vivid imagination, he is one of the most fertile of French dramatic authors, and very likely, he himself could not correctly enumerate his own works. He especially shines in operatic books; besides nearly all Gounod's, he has given Meyerbeer *Le Pardon de Ploërmel*, Victor Massé *Galathée* and *Les Saisoné*, Ambroise Thomas *Hamlet* and *Psyche*. He has made an excellent French adaptation of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, imitated *Cosi fan tutte*, under the title of *Peine d'Amour*, and written many other libretti.

He belonged to a small group of dramatic

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poets, of whom two at least, Ponsard and Émile Augier, achieved celebrity. It was in the house of the latter, who then lived in the Rue des Pyramides, that Barbier made Gounod's acquaintance. M. Augier had praised to his friend the wonderful talent of the young musician, for whom he had just written a libretto; the introduction took place, Gounod sat down at the piano, and with his young, fresh, delightful voice, and inimitable diction, sang the touching musical paraphrase of Béranger's "Old Coat." "There are," says M. Barbier, "no singers equal to him, even among the tenors paid 7000 francs per minute." At the very first notes he was fascinated. The two men saw much of each other after this, and one day, meeting the musician on the boulevard, near the Porte St. Martin (Gounod remembers the circumstance as vividly as if it had occurred yesterday), M. Barbier confided to him that he had long entertained a wish to take an operatic poem from Faust. Gounod jumped at an idea he had secretly cherished in his own breast, and the collaboration was concluded so soon as proposed.

It was not the first time that the same plot had tempted a musician, for it is one of those familiar subjects popular with the public, as much because they are not new as for their intrinsic beauty. But, on the other hand, so vast and lofty a conception is a heavy burden

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for human shoulders; it crushes an inferior genius, and exalts only a gigantic one.

The *Faust* of Spohr, acted in 1810, can only be termed a conscientious work; a little later Prince Radzivill composed another opera of the same name, of which some parts have survived in Germany. Of Mademoiselle Bertin's work (she was a sister of the founder of the *Journal des Débats*), represented at the Théâtre des Italiens of Paris in 1831, nothing remains. It is said Beethoven thought of crowning his career by a *Faust*, but he carried his inspiration to the grave. Rossini was willing to measure himself with Goethe, and Alexander Dumas was to have written the words, but this joint plan was never carried out, which I venture to say is not much to be deplored. Schumann and Berlioz successively essayed with the sublime subject, with the well-known result. The former grasped the mystic side, and many pages of his score are admirable; the latter accented the fantastic features because they suited his eccentric and tumultuous genius, and he produced a work of lofty import. But neither was fitted for the stage.

When M. Barbier conceived the idea of again attempting an opera on the same lines, he began by submitting it to Meyerbeer, who indignantly refused. To him, a true German, *Faust* was the Holy Grail, on which it was sacrilege to

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lay a profane finger. *Robert le Diable* had seemed to him the boldest step he dared to take, the introduction of a tempting demon being like a vague and distant reminiscence of Goethe's poem. But M. Barbier was not discouraged, being of the race of obstinate men—he owns himself that he has always done what he has resolved to do. The history of *Faust* is such a striking instance of what can be accomplished by will, energy, and perseverance, that it deserves to be fully told. It will show what is the genesis of a masterpiece.

After Gounod had resolved to write the music, Jules Barbier expounded his plan to his intimate friend and habitual collaborator, Michel Carré, now deceased, who had just had a small piece, called *Faust et Marguerite*, acted at the Gymnase, in which Goethe's characters, reduced to the dimensions of drawing-room ornaments, had been adapted to the taste of the day, and to the frame of a comedy stage. Carré had probably expended all the courage he possessed, for he exclaimed loudly against the suggestion of his friend. The plot was worn out, he objected; too vast and not theatrical enough. Although he finally consented to make the attempt, he never had any faith in it, and his share of the collaboration was very limited. But if Carré remained incredulous, the two other ones had the

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trust and faith that move mountains, and at the end of a year the opera was finished.

Then began the search for a manager, that anxious pilgrimage, whose bitter disappointments are not always compensated by ultimate success. Roqueplan, the most Parisian, the shrewdest of business-men, shrugged his shoulders, declaring the plot to be out of date. When Alphonse Royer succeeded him at the Imperial Academy of Music, the manuscript was again presented and again declined, not because any fault was found with the music, on the contrary, but because it was not stagey enough. "*Cela manquait de pompe.*" Clever men in fits of momentary blindness have been known to make similar blunders, and the manager who uttered the above platitude was the author of the anything but "pompous" libretto of *La Favorita;* but since Donizetti's time, cavalcades had been brought upon the stage, and the processions of *La Juive* had apparently become indispensable to a success at the Opera.

At last the manager of the Théâtre Lyrique, then situated on the Boulevard du Temple, gave the discouraged artists a chance. Gounod's score pleased him. The part of Marguerite was given to Madame Ugalde, who had just exhibited remarkable dramatic capacity in *Zampa*. But the authors had not come to the end of their tribulations. A *Faust* by Dennery

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intervened; it was played at the Porte St. Martin by Frederick Lemaître with doubtful success; but it delayed Gounod's opera for a whole year. To pacify the authors, M. Carvalho had asked them for a short comic opera. It is always a dangerous experiment to trifle with Molière; however, Barbier made a clever adaptation of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, and on his libretto Gounod wrote some elegant and delicate music, discreetly comic, and full of charming details. It opens with an overture on a violin theme in the style of Lulli; proceeds with a male chorus of graceful sonority; the pretty song of Leander, the duet of Sganarelle and the nurse, and the sextett of the consultation, are clever and bright, revealing an adaptability that is striking when we bear in mind that the same pen had only just written *Faust's* trio.

If *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* does not attain the breadth of *vis comica* of Italian Opera Buffa, so brimful of laughter, yet not a single vulgar note disfigures it—a praise which cannot be awarded to many works of the same class. Represented in 1858 without striking success, this pleasing trifle has not disappeared from the repertory. It was revived once in 1886, at the Opéra Comique, with an excellent cast, and a translation into English was given in London under the title of "The Mock Doctor."

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CHAPTER III.

Faust in rehearsal—Madame Miolhan Carvalho—Scenes in the manager's room—Difficulties relating to the Garden scene—Demands for a finale *à l'Italienne*—Gounod looked upon as a revolutionary—General exhaustion on the first night—The opera excites ardent controversy—Opinions of Scudo—All current ideas upset—The authors experience difficulty in finding an editor—Choudens—Failure of the Théâtre Lyrique—*Faust* goes on tour to Germany and Italy—Its triumph when it returns to Paris.

THE hour came at last when the opera of *Faust* was put into rehearsal. Fresh vicissitudes befell it. During the long stay of the manuscript on the manager's piano, his wife, who was at the same time the star of his theatre, had taken a fancy to the part of Marguerite. Up to that time the charming singer had only been heard in the light brilliant "vocalizze" parts of comic opera, such as *Les Voitures Versées* of Boïeldieu, in which we find the famous duet on the popular theme of "*Au clair de la Lune;*" *La Fanchonnette* of Clapisson; *Le Caïd*, a work after the early manner of M. Ambroise Thomas, which nowadays produces the effect of a tasteful operette; *Les Noces de Jeannette* of Victor Massé, in which she had won immense favour; *La Reine Topaze*, to which all Paris flocked, in order to hear her rival Paganini's violin in

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agility of voice, in the celebrated Italian theme of the Carnival of Venice.

"A thin, shrill soprano, as slender as her person, cut in two by three or four pasty notes, a regular bird-pipe," is the unflattering definition of Madame Carvalho's voice by a critic in 1856. But she is the most striking example of the extent to which intelligent perseverance can conquer natural defects. She was endowed with a marvellously flexible voice of great extent; work and artistic feeling gave her the perfect pitch and management of it, and an admirable style. She succeeded in artificially creating the deficient *medium*, and in linking together her chest and falsetto registers; obtaining marvellous oppositions between the two, she became the perfect *prima donna* she has since been, protracting her lyric career beyond the time generally fixed by nature, and holding the stage with triumph for more than thirty years.

But in 1859 she was as yet only a very good light singer; neither the authors of *Faust* nor she herself have had cause to regret the lofty ambition which prompted her to attempt a more serious part; but at the time they all felt secretly uneasy and anxious. A Diva's will always ends by being her manager's will also, even though the latter be her husband, and Madame Carvalho had her own way. To the intense

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displeasure of Madame Ugalde, a true artist whose career has not been what was expected of her talent, and who lately managed the small theatre of the *Bouffes Parisiens*, her rival exchanged with her the part of Marguerite, for one which she was to create in an *opèra féerie* by Victor Massé, *La Fée Carabosse*, now forgotten.

Then began the preliminary work of staging *Faust*, and the long martyrdom endured by all dramatic authors, but especially lyric ones. For many months the two librettists, the composer, and the manager, met in the managerial office of the Boulevard du Temple, and strange scenes were enacted, sometimes until far into the night. M. Carvalho, clever and ingenious, but fickle and impulsive, altered his mind day after day, under the influence of a fancy, a caprice or a sudden inspiration. Michel Carré, weak, timid, ever doubtful of success, accepted every objection tallying with his retrograde tendencies, and agreed to all the proposed alterations. Gounod, who was more resolute of speech than in action, protested, contended, but finally yielded when exhaustion succeeded excitement in his nervous system. Jules Barbier represented the resisting party, and fought inch by inch to maintain his work in the integrity of form in which he had conceived it.

Were it not indiscreet, I might relate many curious incidents of these epic battles, and it would

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be interesting to recall them to the memory of the now convinced manager and of the famous Prima Donna, on whom the honour devolves, after all, of having been godfather and godmother to a *chef-d'œuvre.* They cannot fairly be reproached even with certain errors of judgment, when contemporary critics and *dilettanti* fell into the bottomless abysses of error which I shall have to record further on. So far as Mme. Carvalho is concerned, it is only necessary to refute an opinion generally held that the "Jewel Song" was written expressly for her. It was, on the contrary, with regret that she consented to sing it, dreading lest her personal success might not sufficiently compensate for the strain upon her voice.

Many more details were discussed in these nocturnal sittings, notably the "Garden Scene," to which I feel bound to allude.

Pedantic critics have blamed Jules Barbier for changing the nature of Goethe's poem by adding to it. They were wrong; they took the part of literature, and when literature interferes with music it blunders. Berlioz's example, and Gluck's before him, have sufficiently proved this. Jules Barbier had no intention of reconstructing *Faust* as a poem; his task was to adapt it to the requirements of lyric form, and he acquitted himself of it with equal taste and intelligence. It was a lucky inspiration to modify the "Garden

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Scene," such as it was conceived by the poet, so as to carry it on to the supreme moment when Faust, frenzied with passion, enters Marguerite's room. Psychologically speaking, nothing is more true than the intervention of Mephistopheles scoffing at the chaste reserve of the Doctor which threatens to ruin his diabolical plan; equally so is the appearance at the window of Gretchen, breathing to the stars her passion fanned by the caresses and the intoxicating perfumes of the night. Barbier would have erred if he had tried to improve upon Goethe's psychology, but it was his privilege as a librettist to introduce this episode, it was even a duty considering the ineffable effect of the music written for it.

But it was not pious reverence for Goethe's work which actuated M. Carvalho when he wished to modify this particular scene; he would not consent to the ending of the act without a good, loud, regular finale of " ensemble " after the approved Italian style, and that instead of this traditional conclusion the curtain should fall on a satanic peal of laughter which is not even sung. What would the public, what would the critics say to anything so revolutionary? It is well known that at one time Gounod was regarded as an iconoclast. " One is always somebody's Wagner," says M. Barbier when he recalls these incidents.

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The scene of the church was frequently displaced, set sometimes before, sometimes after the seduction, and the Walpurgis Night was thoroughly torn to pieces at the last moment, to fit the staging. So it was with many other parts. At last the 19th of March, 1859, dawned. But bodily fatigue, mental weariness after excitement, had reached such a serious pitch with authors, managers, interpreters, and stage functionaries, superadded to the inevitable emotion of a first performance, that they were half unconscious. M. Barbier was even so completely prostrated by the expenditure of vital force during the herculean labour of rehearsal, that he was laid up with nervous fever, and could not be present at the decisive moment.

Was Fortune to smile on so much toil and anxiety? No—she is chary of her favours and sells them dear. The hour of triumph had not yet come. To say that *Faust* was a failure would be an exaggeration, but the opera was vehemently discussed, and its merits were strongly contested. It is interesting to refer to the criticisms of the time for the impression produced by so novel a work. Scudo, who was then the musical reviewer of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, will afford the most accurate indication, and I shall endeavour to sum up the very conscientious and detailed report written by this prince of critics under the impression of the emotion and wonder caused by his first

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hearing of *Faust.* If he did not then take in its full significance, or appreciate all its beauties at their true value, he could not ignore its import and magnitude.

In the first act he dwells on the introduction, "a species of symphonic recitative substituted for the classical overture, the *sinfonia* of the Italians," and praises the pastoral chorus sung behind the scenes. That is all!

In the second act he is not particularly struck by the living, animated picture of the Kermesse; he praises the syllabic chorus of the old men which was encored on the first night. This encore—be it parenthetically remarked—must have been sadly detrimental to the action of the scene, the different parts of which are linked with vigorous logic in order to lead up to the brilliant finale. "Encores" are not always grateful to composers; though they flatter their vanity, they injure their work. Gounod has written somewhere, "The deplorable *bis* disturbs the balance of a composition as well as its scenic truth." But dilettantism did not stop then to consider such trifles. The deleterious effects of encores are better understood now, and that fatal practice is in abeyance; it is but a poor substitute for the decadence of the art of singing on the stage, and perhaps for others also. Our fathers cared less than we do for scenic effects; but at Prague, in 1787, an orchestra

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played at sight the overture to *Don Giovanni*, although it had been written only the preceding night, and the parts had been copied and placed on the desks before the ink was dry.

The original idea of giving tenors the part of old men with shaking heads and cracked voices, does not suggest any remark to Scudo; we may conclude that he approved of it, and was not shocked by this particular innovation. He finds fault with the "Song of the Golden Calf" for its want of relief. This had cost Gounod more pains than any in the score, and before deciding on the air as it stands, he tried over a dozen different ones. In the chorale of the swords, Scudo points out a happy reminiscence of Handel; to the waltz with chorus, which achieved a great success on the first night, he gives lavish applause. "An inspiration of rare elegance," he says, "redolent of German poetry and with delightful instrumentation." He has not a single word for the exquisite dialogue between Faust and Marguerite on meeting in the turmoil of the fête, possibly from an old Italian habit of assigning no importance to anything akin to a recitative.

Scudo considers the third act as the best. This opinion deserves to be recorded as a criterion of the disturbance created by the novel lyrical language of the young composer in the minds of a generation accustomed to Rossini—Gounod

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was not yet forty ; long after that critical date, one is still reckoned among the young at the present day.—Scudo was enchanted, but he did not yield unresistingly to the fascination.

In the cavatina, "*Salve dimora casta e pura,*" the critic praises the discreet and delicate accompaniment, but the vocal part seems to him vague and hovering between *mélopée* and melody, "A constant fault in M. Gounod," he adds. Poor Scudo ! it is well he died before the rise of the new school, for his Italian organization could not have endured the desecration of the old ideal. *Rienzi* and the *Phantom Ship*, *Lohengrin* and *Tannhauser*, had, it is true, already seen the light of day, but *he* had not heard them, and moreover the last operas had fallen flat in Germany, "having only excited the solitary enthusiasm of Listz, which is a bad omen for M. Wagner." He wrote this in 1852. He pretends that in a journey on the Rhine which he made with the express intention of listening to an opera of Wagner's, he saw nothing but Donizetti and Bellini on the bills. As for the *Mephistofele* of Boïto, and the *Otello* of Verdi, such a apostasy on the part of his compatriots would have killed him on the spot. In spite of himself, however, he was bewitched by the penetrating accents of Faust urging his love under the balcony of his adored mistress, by the chaste and exquisite tenderness, the pro-

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found and caressing emotion of this divine composition, but he yields to it unconsciously. He fails to discover the cause, and cannot critically analyze the sensation.

He considers the song of the King of Thulé charming, but that it has, properly speaking, "no air, no musical idea laying a strong hold on memory." He took Mozart's jesting remark seriously when the latter wrote to his father in 1782: "To succeed nowadays, one must write things plain enough for a hackney coachman to remember." Speaking of the quartet in the garden, Scudo questions whether the composer "has found a prominent theme on which to cast the flowers of his fancy and the utterance of his heart," and answers in the negative. He wishes that Gounod had put in its place "one of those scientific pieces of *ensemble* in which unity of composition does not prevent variety of form, such as the trio of the *Pré aux Clercs* or the quartette of *Zampa!*" Such was the condition of the critics in 1859. They were wholly at sea—be it said without disrespect to Hérold, who was a charming musician.

Scudo sees in the quartett only "choice and refined harmonies, with sudden gusts of penetrating sweetness, reminding him of Mozart"—no mean praise in itself—and ends, "Is this a system or is it poverty of ideas?"

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and as in matters of art he very justly believes more in temperament than theory, he arrives at the latter conclusion. When the fiend and the dueña disappear, leaving the seduction to be accomplished, Scudo declares that "there is no duet, only a free and passionate dialogue with entrancing harmonies and sonorities." Unconsciously he gives a perfect definition of a love duet: "a passionate dialogue!" He makes no observations on the incantation of Mephistopheles bidding the flowers to shed their enervating perfume on the already voluptuous air, or on the bold finale that alarmed M. Carvalho.

The ballad of Marguerite at the spinning-wheel, with which the fourth acts opens, is, according to Scudo, cleverly copied from Schubert, and therefore, like all imitations, devoid of the character given by personal inspiration. (In France this ballad is now always left out.) The chorus of soldiers strikes him as a masterpiece of its kind, but he thinks the serenade of Mephisto insignificant, and concludes "that decidedly the devil does not bring luck to M. Gounod." He approves of the style in which the death of Valentine is treated. As for the scene in the church, "so admirable in Goethe," he does not consider that the composer has made the most of it, praising however the pathetic wail of Marguerite.

Comparing the Walpurgis Night to the scene

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in the ruins in *La Nonne Sanglante*, he gives the palm to the latter. Fétis considered that portion of the score a reminiscence of the second act of *Der Freischütz*. In the whole of the prison scene Scudo admires only a few intermittent passages, and specially the concluding trio. His indifference to this wonderful scene, in which the composer rose at one flight to the supreme heights of pathos, proves that the great critic was thoroughly exhausted by the effort of attention demanded by Gounod's daring work.

Of the opera as a whole, he says it is marked by "unfailing distinction of style, perfect tact in details, happy colouring, supreme elegance, discreet sobriety in the instrumentation, revealing the hand of a master who has slacked his thirst at pure and sacred springs, and borrowed from Mozart his chaste and profound harmonies traversed by subdued sighs." Here we have once more the acute and delicate penetration of the critic who so happily described the music of the author of *Don Giovanni* as "phosphorescent."

Scudo did not understand in *Faust* what a mind imbued with the artistic prejudices of his time could not understand; but he appreciated all that belonged to the principles of the Beautiful in music, and gave it a full meed of praise. Let us conclude with his forecast of the future

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of the author, inspired by the first appearance of *Faust*:—

"Whatever may be the ultimate success of *Faust*, this opera cannot fail to extend and enhance M. Gounod's reputation. We are disposed to believe that owing to all the qualities we have enumerated, not less than *through penury and lack of fundamental ideas, that is to say melody*, he is possibly destined to fill in contemporary art the part of a Cherubini, with special and more modern characteristics. This would also be a fine career, and one of which the author of *Faust* would have no cause to complain."

Gounod can look back upon a grander one; the prophecies of Scudo were below the mark. The latter, however, deserves credit for having tempered his severity with *some* praise. From this point of view the audacity of the revolutionary musician, the symphonic richness of his melodies, the importance given to the orchestra at the risk of thrusting the vocal idea into the background, the prominent part assigned to the instruments, sometimes allowed to sing instead of the voices, the frequent use of free song without repetition—all that must have been utterly disconcerting to the critic who limited the ideal of French opera to *Wilhelm Tell*. He was unwilling to have his theories upset, and he never quite forgave Gounod for having disturbed the serenity of his artistic conscience. If the

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beauties of *Faust* partially disarmed him, it is because they were of a quality which conquers opposition, triumphs over tradition, and breaks down the barriers of prejudice; but he atoned later on for one guilty weakness which made him abjure his gods and sacrifice on new altars. His criticism on *Mireille* (given five years later at the Théâtre Lyrique) is merciless, unfair as well as unreasonable, without one word of approbation or kindliness. Not long after, he died in a lunatic asylum, and who knows whether his insanity was not partially due to the overthrow of all his musical doctrines, at which he had to look on helplessly.

Countless and equally remarkable extracts might be put under the reader's eyes. A certain Martin d'Angers, wielding the thunderbolts of criticism in the most influential musical paper of the period, concludes his notice with the hope that "M. Gounod will never repeat the experiment." This confidence was justified, for masterpieces are not often duplicated, although Gounod has since written *Roméo et Juliette.*

Many others, who, if their names were mentioned to-day would blush to the roots of their hair, pronounced unfavourably on *Faust;* but their errors shall not be thrown in their teeth, for Gounod, faithful to his Biblical quotations, would say, "Let those who have never sinned, cast the first stone."

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So much for the press. But what was the attitude of the public ?

More inclined than the critics to accept innovations, whose charm could be felt without having to analyze or discuss them, exempt from prejudice and *parti pris*, less alarmed at the possibility of reconsidering its verdict,—the public was not hostile, but hesitating. The most contradictory feelings were manifested with regard to the new work, and opposing tides of opinion stemmed the regular current either in one direction or the other. The Parisians went to the *Théâtre Lyrique*, but receipts were capricious, success was slow to assert itself. Meanwhile the authors of *Faust*, who had not come to the end of their tribulations, were seeking a publisher for their score, and finding none willing to take the risks of publication, they were on the point of undertaking it at their own cost, when M. Choudens, a beginner in the business, consented somewhat reluctantly to give them 10,000 francs for it, his entire capital. Rarely has so hazardous an experiment met with so rich a reward. Since the date of the publisher's bold venture, thirty years have elapsed, and the modest sum advanced has brought him in nearly three millions of francs, representing an investment at a thousand per cent.

M. Choudens, it is true, spared no pains to

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obtain this desirable result. *Faust* had reached the fifty-seventh performance, a figure it would have never obtained but for the perseverance of the manager in maintaining it on the bills for four months, and the talent of the prima donna, whose qualities attracted the audience more than the music she interpreted. Then came M. Carvalho's failure, and his theatre was closed. The manager of the *Opéra Comique* peremptorily refused to have anything to do either with *Faust* or Madame Carvalho. Choudens at this juncture saddled himself bravely with the opera, the composer and the singer, carried them across the frontier, and together they began a triumphal tour of Europe. However much it may wound French patriotism, it must be confessed that *Faust* came back to us from Germany a success, even as *Carmen*, also a masterpiece, was recognized by us only after it had won fame in Italy. Meyerbeer's apprehensions were not justified; his countrymen did not consider it blasphemous in the authors to handle their national poem, and possibly the composer of *Les Huguenots* more than once regretted his scruples.

After travelling for several years beyond the Rhine and the Alps, in England and in Belgium, the glorious composition returned victorious to the new *Théâtre Lyrique*, re-organized on the Place du Châtelet by M. Carvalho. The sum

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total of the consecutive performances at this theatre was 321. Precisely ten years after the first night, in March, 1869, with a ballet added to it, *Faust* entered the Imperial Academy of Music, where it was, so to speak, created anew. It has already been said that the 500th performance on that stage took place on the 4th of November, 1887, which is equivalent to an average of thirty on the 160—a rough figure—annually given at the Grand Opera. In the provinces and abroad the number is countless, and no symptom shows as yet that the popularity of *Faust* is waning. Many amusing anecdotes might be told about these performances. An *impresario* in Rome, while it was still a pontifical city, wrote one day to Gounod asking him, as the ecclesiastical censure prohibited the appearance of the Devil on the stage, if he could not transform the character of Mephistopheles, making him "*per esempio un medico!*"

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CHAPTER IV.

Criticisms on *Faust*—Schumann's *Faust* mystical—Berlioz's fantastic—Gounod's amorous—M. Barbier treating only the episode of Marguerite—Four situations constituting the eternal legend of love—Ending with atonement for sin by the suffering of love.

HOWEVER lengthy this dissertation on *Faust* has already been, it cannot be closed without mentioning a very serious fault found with it, especially in England. Eminent judges have reproached Gounod with having given too little development and relief to the fantastic side of the subject, and with having dwarfed the philosophical and mystical features, to the advantage of the amorous and elegiac element; they placed his *Faust* in opposition with Berlioz's and Schumann's. This judgment is a misapprehension of the character of the work, as conceived by the librettist and executed by the musician. It should be taken into account that the limitation of human faculties makes it impossible for the artist to embrace all the various aspects of Goethe's poem in the same lyrical drama; it must be for the special temperament of each author to guide him towards the view that most appeals to his heart.

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In calling his work *La Damnation de Faust*, Berlioz clearly indicated his intention of writing fantastic music that suited the intense and eccentric character of his genius. By introducing in his version the *Pater Extaticus*, hovering sometimes on high, sometimes nearer earth; the *Pater Profundis* sounding in the depths; the *Pater Seraphicus* singing in the intermediate regions; Doctor Marianus in a pure and cloistral cell, Schumann followed the bent of his German predilections for mystic and dreamy philosophy. Neither of these works was intended for the stage, and thoughts are clothed differently according to the setting intended for them. Goethe's poem is a synthesis, and on the stage synthesis is apt to be repelling. Wagner attempted the experiment, and some people say it might have been better for the immortality of his great genius and immense talent had he not been so ambitious.

It may likewise be alleged that the fantastic and the mystic *Faust* having been done, and very well done, it was impossible that Gounod should repeat them. He merely aimed at telling the eternal legend of love, its allurements, betrayals, ardours and tortures. He sought his inspiration in Goethe, who had related the legend in a marvellous fashion, and his genius, kindled at the flame of another genius, conceived an absolutely complete work within

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the limits he had laid down. The artist chooses to express his thoughts in the way that suits him, and so long as it is in harmony with the laws of the beautiful, no one has a right to discuss his choice; to do so would be the denial of inspiration, the suppression of originality, the mutilation of genius.

Blame would in this case fall chiefly on the writer of the libretto, for in a lyric drama he gives the design, the musician completing the modelling and adding colour. In his version M. Barbier had deliberately made the fantastic element subordinate to the human, retaining of the former only what he deemed would introduce picturesque variety. I was anxious to know whether he came to this conclusion because he considered it more congenial to French taste and better appropriated to the demands of the stage, or whether in writing for a composer whose artistic temperament he knew to be more at home in passion than in any other element, he had interpreted Goethe's poem so as to give Gounod a libretto specially suited to his personal aptitudes. His answer was categorical.

What in his eyes made this episode of *Faust* the paragon of dramatic plots, was its simplicity and its very ordinary action, which is the only eternal one. It is the drama of the heart which since the beginning of the world has been enacted between three characters, the man, the woman,

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and the devil; the latter being the personification of original sin, if we use the Christian phraseology, or to place the question on freer ground, of passion implanted by nature in the heart and senses of the two other ones. The man attracted to the woman by the strength of desire; the woman falling into his arms under the impulse of the satanic tempter; the selfishness of the one, the self-abnegation of the other, are the elements of the drama. The idealization, the transfiguration by love of a lowly being—for Marguerite is but a serving-wench, says M. Barbier with a roughness of expression which is strictly true—is the second; the third is the purification by suffering of a soul stained by the baseness of humanity.

Is the subject not sufficiently grand? Could any one seriously affirm that it would be improved by additional philosophical developments in which poetry might be submerged and music wrecked, or by the fanciful additions, which after all are manipulations rather than inspirations, and more ostentatious than valuable?

Gounod solemnly declared at the Institute that "Every work of art must come to life under the personal light of feeling, to be perfected afterwards in the impersonal light of reason." Translated into familiar speech, this means that inspiration proceeds from the heart, and is shaped by the brain; mental speculations have

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nought to do with musical art—which does not imply that it may lack intelligence.

Perhaps M. Barbier should have entitled his drama *Faust et Marguerite*, to make it plain that he only intended to reproduce a single phase of Goethe's complex work, and he would not then have exposed himself to pedantic objection. His views once accepted, it remains to be seen whether his collaborator has availed himself of all that they suggested.

The whole action lies in the simultaneous progress of a love inspired by Satan in the hearts of a man and a woman, and it is marked by four important stages. The first is Faust's invocation to the purity which he prizes so high only to sully it. He invokes this purity in perfectly chaste and yet profoundly tender accents, with the shade of melancholy so well expressed in the exquisite lines of Alfred de Musset:—

"Doux mystère du toit que l'innocence habite,
Chansons, rêves d'amour, rires, propos d'enfants,
Et toi, charme inconnu, dont rien ne se défend,
Qui fit hésiter Faust au seuil de Marguerite,
Candeur des premiers jours, qu'êtes vous devenus?"

The constant modulations with their delicate suavity, the pure and intensely penetrating harmonies, the discreet wooing of the orchestra, with its infinite sweetness, the unapproachable purity of the style, constitute a miraculously fine composition; the divine Mozart could have done

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nothing better, for there is nothing better than perfection.

When Marguerite appears the dialogue commences. The work of seduction begins, the fascination of the woman for the man, the irresistible impulse of the man towards the woman, nature herself being the guilty accomplice. The orchestra quivers, the atmosphere grows languid, the intoxicating perfumes wafted at the tempter's bidding combine to thrill the senses of the two young and lovely beings whispering under the foliage ; unconsciously the fever of love burns in their veins, their pulses throb, and they exhale their ecstasy in tender and passionate accents, mingling poetry and voluptuousness in irresistible harmony.

This is not a scene of pure love and chaste tenderness ; Faust and Marguerite are creatures of flesh and blood, and whatever road they take we know what goal they will reach. Through their material and terrestrial ardour passes, however, an ideal breath of German *sehnsucht* that elevates and purifies it. Even after his unbridled transports, the *charme inconnu* spoken of by Musset still exercises its influence over Faust, and he halts on Marguerite's threshold. The hour of her fall, hastened by a diabolical intervention, has not struck. This intention, admirably understood and rendered by the composer, lends to the duet of Faust and Marguerite a character which is

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found in no other. It ought to be said over and over again—music is made for the drama, and not the reverse. When Gounod wrote the Garden Scene he rigorously applied this principle, and if it is not easy to observe at first sight, it is because the bewitching charm of the inspiration and the skill of the handling cast their merciful veil over cold and dry theory, which must never be allowed to dim the lustre of a work of art.

The Church Scene is the third stage of the drama. The madness of love has passed; the pain of betrayal has cooled the ardour of passion, leaving the soul of Marguerite crushed under the weight of sin, tortured by regret and remorse. She is forsaken by the Deity so that she may wash the stain of her guilt in the waters of repentance; the "gentle creature," as the poem calls her, struggles against the demon ruthlessly bent on his prey. There can hardly be found any fault with the manner in which this idea has been translated into music. The sinister clamour of the infernal chorus alternating with the religious chant of the faithful, traversed by the despairing wail of Marguerite, and the mournful cries of a tortured soul, depict with harrowing truth the agony of remorse and terror. And when the cruel voice of Mephistopheles, an echo of hell opening beneath her feet, addresses her from the shadow of the pillar, the ironically suave phrase by which he recalls the innocent past in

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which "she carried in her heart God and her mother's kisses," is an admirable inspiration. Once more Gounod has mastered Goethe's idea with marvellous accuracy.

The last stage is the prison, the fourth, and concluding act of the human tragedy. I do not propose to linger over the gems which lavishly stud the dialogue between Faust penitent and Marguerite absolved; on the intermittent chant of the orchestra with its pathetic accents; on the recitatives, more expressive than any melody; on the reappearance of the theme which recalls the memory of their early love, on all that Scudo has failed or refused to see! I will only mention the final trio, summing up the whole work, stamped with mysticism of the highest order; the sublime, triumphant outcry of the dying victim, whose soul already soars beyond this world, soothed by divine forgiveness, the philosophy of sin wiped out by repentance, the faults of love expiated by love. And having once uttered that barbarous word *synthesis*, let me ask if the work of Barbier and Gounod is not, after all, a synthesis adapted and fitted to theatrical necessities, limited to the resources of lyrical style, such as it must be in short to aspire to the name of a work of art? Disposing of the intellectual point of view, we find on the artistic side accessory developments that enrich the action by their variety, treated by Gounod with his own vivid imagination and

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Marguerite.

Anges purs, Anges radi—ent! portez mon âme au sein des Cieux!

(Faust. 5me acte.)

Ch. Gounod

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lightness of hand, and the joint outcome is a finished whole, every part of which may not be of equal beauty, but which follows the æsthetic rule prescribed by St. Augustine, "*Omnis ferro pulchritudinis unitas est*" (unity is the condition of all beauty).

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Part V.

SECOND PERIOD, FROM FAUST TO ROMÉO ET JULIETTE.

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CHAPTER I.

Fame comes slowly—*Philémon et Baucis*—*La Colombe* at Baden—*La Reine de Saba*—Unsuccessful endeavour to create a hybrid form of dramatic oratorio.

FAME, however, proved coy to the innovator who had opened new horizons to musical art. A long time elapsed before *Faust* conquered the undisputed rank it now occupies. Gounod's *Ave Maria* on a prelude of Bach's, a rare gem it is true, and even more, the serenade of *Marie Tudor*, "*Dormez, dormez, ma Belle*," which is merely a pretty trifle, have done more to make Gounod popular than his grander work. We can hardly realize nowadays, when the Maestro has been invested with the dignity of High Priest of French music, that he found it so difficult to win the favour of the general public. The operas that rapidly followed *Faust* during the succeeding years were equally slow to meet with success. In 1862, *Philémon et Baucis*, was given at the Théâtre Lyrique with Madame Carvalho in the cast. The delightful mythological idyl, arranged as a comic opera by MM. Jules Barbier and Carré for Bénazet, the director of the gaming tables at Baden-Baden, consisted at

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first of one act only. M. Carvalho, who was much taken by the score, asked Gounod to turn it into three acts for him, and the Maestro gave *La Colombe* to the German Casino in its place. He afterwards found that the very quiet action dragged, and he made excisions which contracted the opera to two acts, in which form it has finally remained.

So as not to refer again to *La Colombe*, created at Baden by Madame Carvalho, and afterwards sung at the Opera Comique, let me now say that Bénazet lost by the exchange. A libretto of such slender interest could only inspire pleasant and refined music, without distinct characteristics, save perhaps a few formulas recalling *Faust*, and certain melodic intentions which will be found again in *Romeo*.

Philémon et Baucis ranks high nowadays in the *répertoire* of the Opéra Comique, but was not appreciated at its real worth in 1860, which is all the more strange considering the essentially French character of the composition, based on a broader and more solid foundation than the light works of the period. In writing it Gounod remembered Auber, but did not forget Mozart. Graceful freshness, lightness of touch, and ingenious handling, contribute to make it a charming score, appreciated by the refined, understood by the simple. This delicately carved jewel is set with many precious stones;

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the mere enumeration of the different component parts will bring it vividly before the reader.

The introduction, in a pastoral style, broadly conceived and masterfully executed, prepares the mind and ear for the charming duet sung by the old couple as the curtain rises, its only defect being that popularity has vulgarized it, a fault which is at once the highest praise. As much may be said of the chorus at the wings, "*Filles d'Athor, folles Bacchantes.*" Gounod is a Greek, although not a pagan; Olympus has always inspired him. The trio between Philemon and the two gods wandering incognito is remarkable for its genuine atmosphere of antiquity and primitive dignity. Beyond praise are the verses of Vulcan's ballad; their halting rhythm is characteristic of the blacksmith god's infirmity, without carrying the suggestion to the point of puerile and irritating imitation. In all Gounod's works, and they are numerous, I do not believe that the most discriminating critic can discover many sins against good taste, and in this, if in nothing else, he is the worthy disciple of Mozart. The *arietta* of Jupiter ironically exhorting Venus' consort to bear patiently with his conjugal misadventure is colourless, probably because it is hardly possible to jest with the master of the gods! But the intelligent composer quickly recovers himself in the song of *Baucis*, as tender and pure as the soul of the wife whose heart

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never grew old. The short following quartet, with its rustic freshness, and the stanzas of Jupiter bidding Sleep come to his hosts, with the authority and majesty of an appeased and clement deity, end the first act, which is infinitely superior to the next, because the whole point of the subject lies in the picture of antique hospitality and peace, and the action afterwards is somewhat feeble.

There is, however, no cause to regret that the second act was written, were it only for the *entr'acte* that precedes it, a symphonic piece of exquisite colouring in which the perfection of the idea is equalled only by the merit of the execution. It is a diamond of the purest water. It would be unfair not to mention some charming fragments in this second act, among others the recurrence of the pastoral motive of the introduction, rocking to sleep Baucis, who is once more young; the *arietta* she sings on awaking, written according to the traditional formula of French Opéra Comique, and recalling the best days of Auber. The song of Jupiter, like his former *arietta*, suffers from the discrepancy between the character and the action, the words put into the mouth of the King of Olympus, *en bonne fortune*, not lending themselves to musical composition.

"Que m'importent de vains scrupules?
Pourquoi les terrestres époux
Ne seraient ils pas ridicules,
Quand certains Dieux le sont chez nous?

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"Sans craindre qu'un mortel l'affronte
Jupiter suit sa passion,
Et Philémon peut bien sans honte
Subir le sort d'Amphytrion."

So clever a librettist as M. Barbier should have remembered that certain things cannot be lyrically expressed. The great "*aria d'abilità*," written for Mme. Carvalho, is not very different from the ordinary class of these *tours de force* save for its refinement, and, curiously enough, it bears a strong family likeness to the air of Queen Margot in the second act of *Les Huguenots*. Highly praiseworthy is the duet between Jupiter and Baucis—light, airy, graceful, coquettishly feminine, full of bright sprightliness and telling contrasts of chest and head notes. The recurrence of the *allegretto* of the first duet between the aged couple as a quartet is an excellent conclusion.

These remarks on *Philémon et Baucis* would be incomplete were nothing said of the portion of the score now omitted on the stage, and which contains parts of great merit. The chorus of the blasphemers is vibrating, vigorous, almost rough; the chorus of the drunkards is most original in its slow, languid movement, with the alternately male and female voices answering each other in the obscure dreams of waning reason. Gounod is no less successful in managing choral masses than when he makes one voice sing divinely, or controls a whole orchestra with his powerful hand. In all his works he has proved this superiority, which is

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not the least distinctive mark of his profound knowledge of the technique of his craft.

On the 28th of February, 1862, Gounod's name was once more announced to the audience of the Academy of Music as the author of a grand opera in five acts, represented for the first time. *La Reine de Saba* had been written upon a legend brought from the East by Gérard de Nerval, the coldest and most obscure lyrical subject that could have been selected. To compose good music on so insipid a fable was almost an impossibility; yet Gounod might perhaps have done something with the pale record of the loves of Queen Balkis and the sculptor Adoniram (embellished by an incident of the melting of a statue, which aimed at being dramatic and was simply ridiculous), had he resolutely sought the Biblical atmosphere, and given an important development to the choral parts; for he would then have created a kind of half sacred half profane oratorio, and been powerfully assisted by his innate taste for religious poetry. It is true that this hybrid composition would then have hardly suited the operatic stage.

Such as it is, the work is dull, it lacks character or relief, and is deficient in the warmth and life which are requisite for attraction. Gounod attempted to give considerable prominence to lyrical declamation, but only succeeded in producing heavy and monotonous recitatives. The

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best things in this unfortunate and unsuccessful opera are some interesting choruses, notably the charming dialogue between the Jewesses and the Sabæan women, a mezzo-soprano air of fine design and majestic movement, but without great elevation of ideas, a clever quartet, a pretty ballet, a choral march and dance, as well as a grand finale scene, where a powerful dramatic effect is obtained by the mournful outcry of the Queen at the feet of the expiring sculptor, with the echoing answers of the chorus. An English version of this opera was given in London under the title of *Irene*.

Two years later the indefatigable composer produced five new acts at the Théâtre Lyrique (March 19th, 1864). This time the plot was good in itself, but in some respects unfitted for the composer's genius. The delightful Provençal idyl *Mireio*, by Frédéric Mistral, the master poet of the old *langue d'oc*, on which MM. Barbier and Carré founded a libretto, ought to have been adapted to music by a descriptive musician, by a lover of picturesque local colouring. Gounod is not this; he prefers to deal with the mysteries of the heart rather than the aspects of nature; he is a portrait, not a landscape, painter.

Although he went in quest of inspiration to the plains of the Crau and the meres of the Camargue, *Mireille* has no true local atmosphere.

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Gounod neglected to utilize the popular Provençal airs, so ingeniously used by Bizet in *L'Arlésienne;* the mine was rich enough, and he would have found no difficulty in working up the virgin gold lying at his feet. The *farandole* of the second act has not the ardent "go" of Bizet's; the pretty "*Musette*" of the third act might belong to the pastoral fête of any other province, and the scene of the *Magnanarelles*, however admirably written, does not convey the impression of the gathering of mulberry leaves for the silkworms any more than that of any other kind of harvest. Fresh and fair as a wild flower, the lovely song of *Magali*, arranged as a duet, is a delicious rustic madrigal, but it might belong to the North as well as to the South. The latter is again one of those pieces injured by too wide a popularity. Who has not been haunted by the regular rotation of the two bars, 5/8 and 9/8, which first startles, then charms the ear? Since then, a deplorable abuse has been made of this effect, so strangely alluring in itself. Masterpieces are fated to be plundered, vulgarized, and perverted. Plagiarism and barrel-organs offer the most conclusive homage to a musician's talent.

The only part of *Mireille* which is distinctly scented with thyme and rosemary is the shepherd's song in the third act. It is simply exquisite. Heavy with sleep, steeped in idleness,

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warm with the caresses of a southern sun, it vaguely recalls the goatherd's song in *Sappho*, but with a more modern accent. The flocks of the latter were Greek and pagan, those of the former are Provençal and Christian. Gounod excels in these subtle shadings; only with him it is more a matter of psychology than descriptive aptitude.

Having given utterance to so much censure, and blamed the excessive development given to a plot which did not justify it, there is enough left in *Mireille* to praise, to make it inexplicable why the work was at first so coldly received by the public and the critics.[1] However, some of those who handled it most severely reversed their opinion thirty years afterwards, as we see in the following anecdote, which was related to me by Gounod himself :—

The musical reviewer of the *Figaro* was then M. J. B. Jouvin, son-in-law of M. de Villemessant, the founder of the journal; he had been extremely hard on *Mireille*. The author was deeply grieved by these strictures, and legitimately so. But his consciousness of and belief in the merits of his work sustained him under unmerited attacks. Shortly after, Jouvin accidentally got into the same carriage with

[1] When *Mireille* was revived at the Opéra Comique in 1876 it was reduced to three acts. It has been revived again in 1889.

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Gounod, going by train from Paris to his country house at St. Cloud. He seized him convulsively by the hand, and in broken accents faltered : " Oh, *cher Maître*, Mireille ! Mireille ! " " I knew you would alter your mind about it," quietly answered the composer.

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CHAPTER II.

Second stage—Numerous paraphrases of *Romeo and Juliet*—Gounod's at the Théâtre Lyrique—Immense success—Parallel between *Faust* and *Romeo*—The latter a love poem in four duets—Love in Germany and Italy—The difference defined by the music—Gounod prefers *Romeo* to *Faust*—*Roméo et Juliette* at the National Academy of Music.

It is full time to come to the second glorious stage in Gounod's artistic career, to the work which finally and indisputably consecrated his genius and sealed his fame, *Roméo et Juliette*. The immortal drama had been exploited by many musicians before him. The principal lyrical compositions founded on the same plot are: Steibelt's opera, the libretto by the Comte de Ségur, given at the Théâtre Feydeau, in Paris, in 1779, with great success, but now forgotten by our ungrateful generation; Zingarelli's one, sung in 1796 at Milan, by the celebrated prima donna Grassini—who so impartially divided her favours between the Emperor Napoleon and Wellington—assisted by the male *soprano*, Crescentini, who composed and interpolated the great air of Romeo, "*Ombra adorata*," which is the best piece in this feeble score. In 1826 a new *Romeo* by Vaccaj was produced at Milan, con-

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taining one fine air, which alone survived the score, and is still sung by Madame Alboni. In 1830 Bellini wrote in Venice, *I Capuletti ed i Montecchi*, and the Marquis d'Ivry, ten years ago, had the *Amants de Vérone* performed in Paris. We must not forget to mention the remarkable symphonic series written by Berlioz, on the same subject, and called by him "an opera without words."

But all these musical paraphrases of Shakespeare's play disappear in the effulgence of the performance given on the 27th of April at the Théâtre Lyrique, with dazzling success, and at once ranked with *Faust* in the *répertoire*. Between these two sister works, children of the same heart and soul, similar in style, there exist, however, notable differences, resulting from the nature of the respective subjects.

Faust, as we have seen, is remarkable for its homogeneity, the happy outcome of the subordination of the fantastic to the emotional element. It is not possible to say that all the parts of *Roméo et Juliette* are linked by so close a bond, and this could not well have been so. All Jules Barbier's cleverness could not make the plot other than a love duet, or rather a succession of love duets. Young Montagu and the daughter of the Capulets meet, and their mutual love is born—first duet, which is a discreet declaration of their feelings, subdued by conventional

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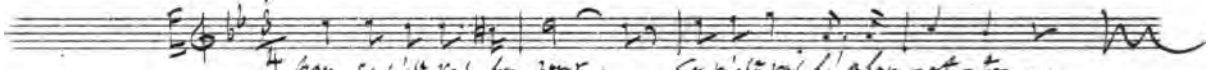
(Juliette)



(Roméo et Juliette. 4me acte.) Ch. Gounod

à mon ami Bazin. Rome du Palais.

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restraint. Romeo returns, wandering under Juliet's balcony, and they exchange their vows under the protecting light of the silent stars—second duet, tender and passionate. Juliet receives in her room the lover she has married before God—third duet, in which they pour forth all the ardour of avowed and reciprocated love. They meet once more in the sombre shadows of the tomb—fourth duet, of tragical despair.

Beyond this there is nothing in *Roméo* save episodes brought in to give variety to an action to which they are foreign. Even the scene of the duel, which is made the pivot of the play, fails to arouse us, because in reality it creates no plausible modification of the respective situation of the two chief characters. It is merely an added obstacle; neither the vindictive Tybalt nor the feeble Count Paris interest us. Stefano seems to have been introduced merely to add an unit to the scanty numbers; he has not even as active a part as Siébel in *Faust*, who belongs to the plot in virtue of his humble love for Marguerite. These blemishes are the fault neither of the author nor the composer; they are inherent to the subject, and, having recorded them, let us see what Gounod could do and has done with it.

The four duets above mentioned are the

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luminous stars of the work. After the delightful madrigal for two voices of the first act, babbling so charmingly the gallant *concetti* of Shakespeare, comes the balcony duet, with its melodious and deeply expressive recitatives; the ardent, irresistible cry of Romeo, "*Ah, je l'ai dit, je t'adore,*" the exquisitely tender and archly graceful phrase rendering the poet's words :—

> "'Tis almost morning, I would have thee gone,
> And yet no further than a wanton's bird,
> Who lets it hop a little from her hand,
> And with a silk thread plucks it back again,
> So loving jealous of his liberty."

and the farewell, in which smiles and tears are mingled, and the divine chant of the violins, across which Romeo in a frenzy of passion throws "the kiss he entrusts to the summer night's breeze." All is perfect in this scene, a masterpiece of amorous poetry, and to the minutest detail of instrumentation there is not one note too many, one note too few. This duet is too often thrown into the shade by the one called "de l'Alouette," but wrongly so, for it has a great artistic value, and is as well adapted to the situation as the other, which it announces and foreshadows.

There is no doubt, however, that the scene in Juliet's room is of surpassing, eclipsing beauty, for never has a more marvellous, more spontaneous hymn of love been exhaled, and it would be vain to seek in it the slightest trace of

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artificial workmanship. From the instrumental prelude preceding the raising of the voices, to the final invocation of Juliet confiding to the angels the fate of her lover, the intensity of emotion never slackens, and is obtained by an equally admirable simplicity of means. A smooth accompaniment of the quartet progressing with a long symmetrical march of sixths, seems so natural as to be almost plain; but with his impeccable taste and faultless tact, Gounod understood that far from exalting the melodious idea, any extraneous adornment would stultify it; it soars alone, so far above the world that it spurns any futile assistance. The classic nude requires no draperies, however rich, being in itself perfectly beautiful.

Between these two characteristic and superb expressions of earthly love, the duet in *Roméo et Juliette* and the duet in *Faust*, comparisons have often been made, and preference given sometimes to one, sometimes to the other. It would be more just and wise to leave them on the same level, for each responds to a different form of sentiment. Love wears many and various aspects. There is a gallant, libertine, sensuous love—it is that of *Don Giovanni;* an exalted, intense, heroical love, leading to martyrdom and death —it is that of the *Huguenots;* a romantic love, poetry of the heart mingling with poetry of the senses so that it is impossible to define where

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the one begins and the other ends—it is that of *Faust;* an intoxicating, voluptuous, and triumphant love, idealized by ecstasy—it is that of *Roméo.*

Examining only the famous duets of the two last mentioned operas, and taking into account their respective character, we see how profoundly different is the inspiration of each. In the first we are carried away to Germany, the land of dreams and *sehnsucht,* where love has a soft, languid, contemplative grace. Lovers whisper their vows gathering forget-me-nots, or consulting the oracle of the "marguerite;" taking the moon, the stars, the mosses, and the brooks as witnesses of their courtship; mysticism mingles with their sentiments, reality elbows poetry. In the second we are in Italy, the land of burning suns and fiery passions, of stilettos and serenades, where love murmurs under the mask in brilliant fêtes, where silk-clad lovers scale the balcony of their mistress, at the foot of which *sbirri,* bribed by jealousy, watch to strike a deadly blow, where the fury of the *vendetta* rages and kills. It is neither the same land nor the same race.

There is yet another difference. The duet of the garden is a scene of seduction, the duet of "l'Alouette" is the expression of victorious and satisfied passion. In *Roméo* the drama does not linger over the preliminaries of love as it does

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in *Faust;* the situations are not the same, the characters are not alike. The intervention of the demon is necessary to achieve Marguerite's ruin, but Juliet falls spontaneously into Romeo's arms, and one element of Faust's amorous synthesis, remorse, is absolutely absent in Romeo. Some of the critics who have psychologically studied both duets, have called Juliet's love "legitimate," a mere play on the words. The daughter of the old Capulet is in rebellion against society and the all-powerful parental authority of the age she lived in; her passion is a guilty one, therefore as "illegitimate" as Marguerite's, and she knows it. But while the chaste northern maiden is troubled to the very depths of her soul by the consciousness of her sin, the ardent Italian girl, absolved from all religious scruples by the blessing of Friar Lawrence, abandons herself recklessly to the delirium of passion. The love presented to us under the grey dim German skies is melancholy and mournful, the love expanding in the light and sun of southern lands is joyous and insolently triumphant.

Gounod felt and described these subtle divergences with faultless discernment, and we should abstain from comparing two compositions of equal artistic value, but of a different inspiration. Personally I own to a preference for *Roméo et Juliette*, if I may venture to express an opinion which, unsupported by reason, is even in opposi-

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tion to what I have just said; but I have in my favour an indisputable authority, that of the author himself. He does not certainly declare himself so openly for or against his two children, but it is easy to guess what he secretly thinks. If another testimony were required, I might appeal to a witness who is too often disregarded—the public. On the first night of *Roméo et Juliette* the duet "l'Alouette" was not only encored, but interrupted by the enthusiastic applause of the audience at the moment when, as M. Barbier graphically described it, "Mme. Carvalho passed from one of the arms of the tenor Michot to the other." The artists could not continue, and had to begin *da capo.* This incident is probably unique in stage annals. It was a splendid *première*, and this time at least the author had not to wait before reaping his laurels.

Every medal has its reverse side. If one passage of surpassing beauty is sufficient to insure the immortality of an opera, it throws the remainder of the work, and especially the parts immediately following, into the shade. The scene in the tomb suffers from this disadvantage; the emotions of the audience, exhausted by the trial they have just undergone, ceases to respond to fresh demands on their sympathy. Yet what can be finer than this symphonic piece, cradling Juliet's slumbers with

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its delightful sweetness and profound melancholy? And what treasures in the funereal duet! The heart-rending appeals, the rebellious cries, followed by the ineffable ecstasy of two souls soothed in death by the vision of eternal and infinite bliss, have been rendered by the composer with mournful recitatives, and accents of anguish traversing the interrupted theme of the orchestra, in mingled memories of *Faust* and a recurrence of the duet of *l'Alouette* and its marvellous symphonic prelude.

The *leit motiv*, that is, the recurrence of a fragment of melody indicating a connection between two situations or two moral conditions, has been employed here with perfect tact and exquisite art. Scudo and his compeers would probably have blamed its use, as proving a scarcity of ideas, but we now think differently, and the abuse of this method does not detract from its dramatic value in the hands of a man endowed by nature with a quality that no science can give, and in which genius itself is sometimes deficient—the exquisite and delightful quality of taste.

My statement, founded on a desire of explaining certain weaknesses of the libretto, that the whole interest of *Roméo et Juliette* is centred in the four love duets just analyzed, is perhaps exaggerated, for the score contains several other numbers of great beauty. The despairing phrase

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of Juliet during the ball, when she learns, too late for her peace, that she has given her heart to the hereditary foe of her house, is endowed with tragic force that evokes the shades of Greek fatality. Equally worthy of praise is the prologue without accompaniment, after the style of an antic chorus, in which all the actors in the drama tell in fine vocal declamation the mournful story they are about to enact. In borrowing it from Shakespeare, M. Barbier was well inspired, and he has been ably seconded by his musical collaborators. The epithalamium, for eight voices with chorus, only accompanied by a few wind instruments, is in the same style, and has a powerful effect. The solemn unction of the wedding trio also deserves special eulogistic mention; and there is yet another part too much overlooked when *Roméo* is discussed, a little masterpiece of fantastic originality, the ballad of Mercutio, whose characteristic merits are due to the subtle and piquant effects of the instrumentation.

There are certainly some weak points in this opera, but what avails the easy criticisms which no work of art can escape? Their fleeting shadows hardly dim the lustre of *Roméo et Juliette*. Let us merely quote M. Reyer, then, as he is now, the musical reviewer of the *Journal des Débats*, when, speaking of the waltz in the first act, hypercritically called an *arietta*, he says:

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"It is too insignificant a musical incident for the hypercritical to regard it as a serious departure from M. Gounod's habitual custom of composing types and not writing parts, each preserving its special physiognomy." Gounod owed a few concessions to Mme. Carvalho in the shape of *vocalizze*, *gruppetti*, cadences and chromatic scales; and we came to the same conclusion as the fertile author of *Sigurd* in the notice quoted above, in praising the charm, elegance, variety, force and delicacy of thought and execution which render *Roméo et Juliette* equally remarkable for science and inspiration.

The general public ratified the enthusiasm of a first-night audience and the eulogy of the press. After reaching the satisfactory number of one hundred consecutive performances at the Théâtre Lyrique, *Roméo et Juliette* was revived in 1873—still with Mme. Carvalho—at the Opéra Comique, and held its place in the *répertoire* for fifteen years. In 1888 the composition passed to the National Academy of Music, which might be styled the Upper House of lyrical composition. Created afresh by Madame Adelina Patti and the famous tenor, M. Jean de Reszké, it now stands side by side with its elder brother *Faust*, and has achieved a no less remarkable success.

It may be that the huge stage of the Grand Opera is not the most perfect frame for a

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composition whose dramatic character, however intense, is neither so marked nor so vehement —if the word may be used—as the immense proportions of the house seem to require. As had previously happened with *Sappho*, the additions and developments imposed on the author by its transmutation have rather injured than improved the primitive form. The claims of the subscribers compelled Gounod to introduce a ballet, hastily and perfunctorily composed, which retards the action and checks the interest with no other compensation than a display of legs. Notwithstanding their affected enthusiasm for Wagner and his doctrines, the Parisians have not yet acquired the Bayreuth Maestro's reverence for the logical sequence which makes an endless chain of his operas.

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Part VI.

THIRD PERIOD—SACRED MUSIC.

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CHAPTER I.

Gounod at the zenith of his fame—He takes no rest—Honours, fortune, favours, the rewards of his genius and labour—Residence in London—*Gallia*—*Jeanne d'Arc*—*Les Deux Reines*—Prose in music—*Georges Dandin*—Gounod's opinion of English musical taste—*Polyeucte*—*Cinq-Mars*.

At this period of his career, Gounod—then a man of nearly fifty—had reached the zenith of his fame. Henceforth he could rise no higher. He was in the position of Rossini after *Wilhelm Tell*. The Italian Maestro has been praised for resting on his laurels, and possibly he did well. Gounod has acted otherwise, and no one thinks of blaming him, for since then, covering a space of twenty years, if his work has been unequal, he has not written a single page for which his admirers have had to blush, and if he has not scaled another step of the ladder leading to Parnassus, he has maintained himself without effort or hesitation on the heights to which *Roméo et Juliette* had borne him.

After his triumph of 1867 there was a pause, a time of relative rest which he had well earned. Without even counting the choruses of *Ulysses*, he had in twenty years achieved thirty-four acts, besides symphonies, Masses, and a

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large number of vocal compositions, melodies and songs, duets, religious hymns, &c. Public favour, the gifts of fortune, official honours and academic laurels had been the reward of his labours. Already Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, he had received the grade of Officier in 1860, the same year that he entered the Institute, succeeding Clapisson. He has since been raised to the rank of Commander, and later still to that of Grand Officier, the highest dignity to which he can aspire, the red ribbon being given, with very rare exceptions, to generals and admirals only.

These honorary distinctions are recorded merely as a statement of facts, for no one cares less for them than Gounod himself. What can they add to his prestige and his fame? The real standard of his renown is the position he has occupied from that time to the present in the national and foreign artistic world, and which no other French musician has ever attained. Because Paris happened to be the theatre of their success, it must not be forgotten that Gluck and Meyerbeer were Germans, and Rossini an Italian. Unless we go back to Rameau, only the name of Berlioz shines brightly among the great masters of French music, and he was unappreciated during his life-time. Bizet died too young; Halévy, whose talent was far inferior to that of the two artists just mentioned, enjoyed

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a considerable degree of popularity, but it never approached Gounod's. And even then, the author of *La Juive* was an Israelite, and the author of *Faust* is French, Gallic, and Parisian. Beloved, worshipped, adored more than any of his dead rivals, he has none among the living. As only his compatriots are here alluded to, there is no need to contrast him with Wagner, who has so lately disappeared, or with Verdi, who still reigns triumphant in Italy. Notwithstanding the admiration and respect inspired by the ability of M. Ambroise Thomas, that composer cannot enter the lists with Gounod. The latter has tasted all the triumph that can reward an artist, and if his felicity is the legitimate guerdon of his merit, no man ever proved himself more worthy of happiness by the simplicity and kindliness with which he accepts it.

A period of ten years elapsed between *Roméo et Juliette* and the work which followed it in the chronological order of Gounod's dramatic compositions. But he did not remain inactive during that time. A tree would sooner cease to bear leaves in the spring than so indefatigable a worker allow the ink to dry on his pen. After the Franco-German war, for personal motives into which we have no right to inquire, the Maestro, who, however, had no longer to deplore the ingratitude of his country, settled for a time in England.

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Paris even feared that he would never return; had that been the case, France would never have forgiven "perfidious Albion."

From an artistic point of view, the only one we have to consider, the period of his voluntary exile was not sterile. Among his minor productions it is interesting to mention the inspired Christmas melody on Lord Tennyson's lines, "Ring out, wild bells," taken from *In Memoriam*, and the "Bells of Monterey," written expressly by Bret Harte for Gounod, who invested the characteristic poem with an atmosphere as distinctly personal as the words. Besides these and many other comparatively light works, some important compositions saw the light in London. *Gallia* was given at the Albert Hall in May, 1871 (while the ruins of the Commune were smoking in Paris), and afterwards sung at the Opéra Comique. The title of the work and its sub-title, "*Lamentation*," so clearly defines its character that there is no necessity to examine it closely. Equally rapidly shall we pass over another composition inspired by the same patriotic feeling so mournfully excited by the sorrows of France—the chorus and symphonic pieces written for the *Jeanne d'Arc* of Jules Barbier, represented in 1873 in Paris. The drama made little mark, and the music had the same fate. Sarah Bernhardt has quite lately revived it, and the press has loudly extolled the venture.

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In 1872 Choudens published the musical pieces written by Gounod as an accompaniment to a play by M. Ernest Legouvé, *Les Deux Reines*, an inferior work which dragged them down in its fall, and of which hardly anything is now remembered save a pilgrim march arranged for military bands. The Maestro, who had founded a choral society, called "Gounod's Choir," devoted himself to it with great assiduity during his stay in London, composing pieces to be performed by the members. I cannot omit to mention a delightful little Italian poem by Giuseppe Zaffira, *Biondina*, on which Gounod has written a series of sweet love songs, admirably adapted to the words by their freshness, grace, and touching simplicity of style. This tiny composition, which might belong to the epoch of his residence in Rome from its juvenility and Italian flavour, is far too little known. Number 4 especially, a gem of deep pure tenderness, and number 12, with its accompaniment like a funeral march, resemble in their minute and delicate workmanship the small perfect miniatures on a golden ground of the Sienna School. The author owns to a preference for number 9, perhaps because it concludes with a divinely amorous phrase worthy of the composer of *Roméo et Juliette*.

During his stay in London Gounod made an interesting attempt, which, however, he did not

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follow up. Struck with the disadvantage of transforming good prose into bad verse in the operatic adaptation of a play, he tried to have the words sung as they were written. This being done in sacred music, why not in profane? The text he had selected for his experiment was *Georges Dandin*, and the result proved eminently satisfactory; he has caught the rhythm of Molière's prose so admirably, that in spite of the absence of rhyme, a non-musical ear could not have distinguished that it was not poetry. For reasons independent of Gounod's will, the score of this small comic opera was not finished; he may take it up again some day.

It may be opportune here to state what Gounod thinks of the musical feeling in England. "When one sees Englishmen attentively follow the execution of a score," says he, "as grave and solemn as if they were fulfilling an austere duty; then suddenly, as if a spring had been touched, raise their heads and with beaming faces exclaim, '*Oh, how nice!*' '*Very beautiful, indeed!*' and again bury themselves in their book as gravely and solemnly as before—one cannot help thinking that they are rather bent on being musicians than really so. They are actuated by British pride, because their artistic taste must be superior to the taste of other nations, just as their navy is more powerful, and their cotton and flannel of better quality." He recognizes, however, that it is

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England who made the success of *Redemption* and especially of *Mors et Vita*, and that these two serious works would not have been appreciated in France had they not been imported from across the Channel. He considers that the English public has a more educated taste than the French as regards sacred music, possibly from loftier religious convictions.

When Gounod made up his mind to return to Paris in 1875, his first occupation was to re-write a great opera in five acts from memory. The manuscript had met with a misfortune. *Polyeucte* had been composed in 1868, but the orchestration was written in England, and it was not represented at the Opera in Paris until October 7th, 1878.

The setting of Corneille to music was a bold venture, and it did not reap the success it deserved. The attempt was renewed since by M. Massenet in the *Cid* with even less good fortune, although the subject was the better of the two; but the difference of merit between the two composers must be taken into consideration.

Of all the tragedies of the classic French playwright *Polyeucte* is probably the least adapted for transplantation to the lyric stage. It is easy to understand what points attracted Gounod's lofty intellect, and appealed to his mystical tendencies; but on the other hand the characters of Pauline, Polyeucte and Sévère are so grand, so noble, so

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generous, and endowed with such extreme elevation of feeling that they hardly lend themselves to operatic parts. It may be said that there is scarcely any love at all in the five acts, for although the chaste conjugal tenderness of a woman, resigned to a union formed against her inclination, is a beautiful sentiment to put in verse, it lacks the emotional warmth required by the lyrical form. As to Sévère's magnanimous conduct and virtuous reserve, which are highly admirable in the victorious patrician, they carry no passionate element into the action when he figures as a baritone.

Finally the part of Polyeucte is too equivocal to be wholly sympathetic. It is no longer a tragic hero who speaks, but a strong tenor who sings, making human love subservient to love of the Creator; consort, lover, and martyr, he is three in one—and this is too much for the audience. To these disadvantages it must be added that M. Barbier was anxious to preserve the original lines so far as it was feasible, thus compelling the Maestro to write recitatives more declamatory than vocal on Alexandrine metre, and it is easy to realize the impression of heaviness and monotony created by this opera, which, however, as a whole, is interesting, and contains some very fine parts. The quartet of the first act, with chorus, is a passage of lofty inspiration and magnificent effect; Pauline's invocation to Vesta has a faint sug-

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gestion of Gluck; the barcarole of young Sextus is original, even slightly eccentric; the scene of the baptism is in a grand religious style, in which the sublime ecstatic phrase of the neophyte shines like a diamond set in gold, and the prison duet contains remarkable passages, especially the whole of the symphonic part accompanying the reading of the New Testament. Is this not enough to prevent *Polyeucte* from falling into oblivion? Now that judicious excisions have reduced it to four acts, we must hope to see it reappear on the stage, where it will hold a place, if not in the first rank, at least in a distinctly honourable one.

I pass in silence over *Cinq-Mars*, given at the Opéra Comique, April 5th, 1877. Great weaknesses, contrasting with pure and poetical pages, such as the tenor's song and the mezzo-soprano cantilena, reveal the haste with which it was strung together. Barely two months for three acts is not a sufficient time in which to produce a drama in the modern lyric form. Zingarelli may have composed *Romeo e Giulietta* in a week, but the only part of it that has survived is not his, being a clever *pasticcio* of Mozart's. I shall likewise not say much of Gounod's last opera, represented in 1882, at the Academy of Music. A heavy melodrama, sombre without being dramatic, monotonous and incoherent, with no really interesting character, *Le Tribut de Zamora* by MM. d'Ennery and Brésil, could

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not possibly inspire the cleverest composer. Gounod does not seem to have struggled against the impression of *ennui* it creates, and has lost himself in a confusion of styles, widely apart from the clearness and homogeneity so characteristic of his manner. Therefore, in spite of some good bits—the warlike chant, the remarkable scene in which the insane Hermosa recovers her reason, a charming ballet, and the solid learning inherent in all the Master's works, this opera did not go beyond thirty performances. Gounod says resignedly, "Yet there were some good things in *Le Tribut*, and the public has been somewhat severe—but there is nothing more to be said: it is an opera killed under me."

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CHAPTER II.

Gounod's love of sacred music—Masses—Canticles—Motets—The *Ave Maria* on Bach's prelude—Strange error of a critic—*The Redemption*—Its character—*Mors et Vita*—Frivolity of the Parisian public—Conditions unfavourable to the performance—Gounod on applause—Mass of *Jeanne d'Arc.*

THE stage has bestowed fame enough upon Gounod to enable him to submit bravely to certain disappointments. In entering upon the study of his sacred music we shall find that, even admitting the dramatic inspiration to have left him, he can still find an ample field for his talent in religious composition, and the experience and activity of mind which age has in no way impaired. The artists who having passed their sixth decade, can do as good work as they ever did before are rare. Gounod has proved that he is one of them. Has he entirely renounced operatic scores? He thought so himself for awhile, and others believed it, and it was then that his taste for sacred music revived with all its youthful keenness.

Mention has already been made of his earlier religious compositions. The stage had not since that time so completely absorbed him that he found no leisure in which to write a great deal

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of church music, canticles, hymns, a short oratorio, *Tobie*, also several Masses, respectively called *Ste. Cécile*, *The Sacred Heart*, *Easter*, which I shall not analyze in detail so as not to weary the reader. But I cannot so summarily dismiss the famous *Ave Maria*, composed on the first prelude of Bach, and which has popularized under the same flag the great names of Gounod and of the Maestro of Eisenach.

The majority of those who sing the *Ave Maria* have but a vague notion of the collaboration of the two musicians, and this will hardly seem surprising when we remember the singular mistake made by the critic who speaks in the universally respected *Revue des Deux Mondes*. After having explained how Bach's prelude is but a sequence of *arpeggio*, chords deducted from each other in harmonious series, rendered drier still by the sound of the piano; that it contains hardly any thought, and still less passion, that it lacks "what every modern ear will miss," he declares that Gounod filled the gaps. To modernize Bach is a feat likely to please the critic in whose opinion M. Massenet has found the crowning formula of oratorio, and who insinuates that *Marie Madeleine* might be as near God as *La Passion selon St. Matthieu*. But with all due respect to M. Camille Bellaigue, Gounod has had as little intention of rejuve-

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nating the old *Cantor* of St. Thomas, as Johann Sebastian himself had of making church music of his first prelude. If such had been his plan he would undoubtedly have found the fitting theme for his austere *arpeggi*, called by M. Bellaigue an "accompaniment." It is easy to understand why the latter has not a great liking for "*the well-tempered pianoforte*," as he considers the introductory chorus of the *Passion* particularly grim and repelling, and that Bach, "who had science and not love," is as wearisome as grammar. But he is inclined to be indulgent to the "old organist," as he calls him, and to forgive him for not investing a simple piano study with the fascination so freely imparted to M. Massenet's religious compositions.

If the reader is incredulous, let him consult the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of September 15th, 1887. As to M. Bellaigue, let him ask Gounod to explain Bach to him, and the Maestro's eloquence will make him understand the composer of whom he says: "The whole of music is in that man." He will then proceed to tell him that in the ingenious idea of utilizing the first prelude as accompaniment to a religious melody, there was no irreverent intention of correcting or improving the "Master of Masters." Gounod, I am sure, would rather tear up this fine composition with

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his own hands than be accused of such a sacrilege.

Were I to consult my inclination only, I would dwell lovingly on the two oratorios by which Gounod has so brilliantly closed the present phase of his career—this by no means implies that he will cease to create in the future. On the contrary, let us hope fervently that he will conclude the sacred trilogy of which *The Redemption* and *Mors et Vita* are the two first parts. There is much to say about them, for the subject is a wide one, but these two admirable works are so well known in England, where they first saw the light, they have been so ably analyzed and commented upon, that my comments could only reiterate those detailed criticisms. I shall therefore merely consider a specious censure often passed upon Gounod with regard to his sacred music, and more particularly to *The Redemption.*

It is very justly said that he is a believer, and that every one of his religious compositions is a confession of faith. He does not, like M. Massenet, work upon a fanciful poem, taken from an episode of the Bible, more or less successfully turned into a romance; he is not, and does not wish to be the Renan of Music. He himself writes the words of his oratorios from the sacred texts with which he is so familiar, and aims at being an apostle as

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well as an artist. What he strove to represent in *Redemption* under a lyric form are "the three great facts on which depends the existence of the Christian Church. These facts are: 1st, the passion and death of the Saviour. 2nd, His glorious life on earth from His resurrection to His ascension. 3rd, The spread of Christianity through the teaching of the Apostles." (Commentary by the author preceding the score.) If so, say the critics, why the dramatic character of the work? If so, why these reminiscences of *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette?* Why the mundane accents transforming fervent and wholesome religion into vague and poetical religiosity? And while ever and anon the fervent disciple of Palestrina, the pious son of Bach, stands revealed in a fugue, a choral, a passage of Plain Chant, the whole is marred by anachronisms, contrasts, incoherencies, and confusion of styles; in short, by the want of unity, even more indispensable to music to be performed in a cathedral than to any other.

There is some truth in this criticism. But maybe the entire fault does not rest with Gounod. It is senseless to cite Bach in opposition to him, for, however admirable and excellent the Master of Sacred Music was, he has, nevertheless, left a field in which others may sow and reap. If the character of *The Redemption* is so utterly different from the *Passion selon St.*

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Mathieu, is it not because the character of religion itself has been modified during the century and a half which separate the two compositions? With all Gounod's fervent piety, he could not escape the influence of the circumambient atmosphere, and soar above his epoch. Therefore, admitting that he had the qualities necessary for writing a second *Passion*, he would not have written such a work, because the time had passed when artistic inspiration might take that shape. If Bach had lived in Paris in the middle of the nineteenth century he assuredly would not have written it either, because his genius would have been moulded in another form. Gounod is a thoroughly sincere artist, he worships Bach and adores Mozart, but he never dreamed of being Bach or Mozart. He is Gounod, and there his ambition ends.

A rapid reading of the score of *The Redemption* will prove more than words the truth of what has just been said. What are its finest and most personal parts? First, the typical melody of Jesus, brought out for the first time after the celestial choir has let the promise of redemption fall upon mankind (Prologue, C), and which recurs nine times in the course of the work, brought back each time with the master's well-known dexterity of touch. Then the touching phrase, "Ye daughters of Israel," and "Pardon their sin, My Father," developed on the fifth re-

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currence of the typical melody; next the pathetic scene between the two thieves. In the second part we have the procession of the holy women to the sepulchre, a march full of grace and colour, and carrying with it a breath of dewy morning freshness, and their delicate little trio, "From Thy love as a Father," which is once again the soprano air with chorus. The third part contains a delightful instrumental prelude depicting "the dawn of this age of bliss," the chorus, "Lovely appears over the mountains," exquisite in its serenity and peace, as is the soprano air, "Over thy barren wastes." All these passages have the caressing tenderness characteristic of Gounod's genius, manifested in its present form. His God is truly a God of love, of peace, of pardon! There is less sincerity in the other parts, notwithstanding their superior handling and great dramatic effect, with the exception, however, of nearly the whole apostolic hymn, of the two semi-choruses, "The earth is My possession," and "O My vineyard," and finally the three chorales in the old style which are deserving of unreserved praise.

And now, if it be said that descriptive colouring is lacking in the instrumental prologue, that the march to Calvary is disconnected and tame, that the quartet with chorus at the foot of the Cross is cold and languid, that the

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scene of insults has not the adequate vigour, that the chorus of the Ascension is more noisy than effective, that the action occasionally drags—so be it! But, looking back upon the beautiful pieces enumerated above, would it not have been a pity if Gounod, not finding in himself the materials for a second *Passion selon St. Mathieu*, had renounced his intention of once more relating that history of Christ, of which he had conceived the idea, written the words, composed some of the fragments during his stay in Rome in the winter of 1867-68, and matured the execution in the course of twelve years? Is he not marvellously rich, the musical genius who can find rest after *Roméo et Juliette* in sketching out *The Redemption?*

The second of Gounod's sacred trilogies is not open to the criticisms induced by the first, and which I have endeavoured to mitigate. Far superior to *Redemption* in style, severity of form and grandeur of treatment, *Mors et Vita* chiefly owes these advantages to the fact that the subject is not human, but belongs to the region of pure ideality. "Although life precedes death in the order of Time," says Gounod, "in the Eternal order death precedes life. Death is the end of existence, of what dies every day, but it is the initial moment, the birth, of what never dies." This is the inspiring idea of the work. The tears shed for death, the anguish of parting

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with loved ones, on the one hand ; on the other, our hope of a better life, the solemn dread of stainless Justice, the filial and confiding trust in a boundless Love ; lastly, the light and beatitude of immortal life,—these are the sentiments expressed in *Mors et Vita*. Hence its three parts : *Mors*, a Requiem ; *Judicium*, the slumber of the dead, the call of the trumpets of the Last Judgment, the resurrection, and the sentence passed on the saved and the lost; *Vita*, the vision of St. John, *Cœlum novum, nova Terra*. (Revelation, chap. xxi.)

There is no possibility of introducing the faintest dramatic element into this grandly austere plan, and the work has been dedicated to Pope Leo XIII. with as much propriety as *Redemption* was to Queen Victoria.

I shall not enter into the details of this fine score, nor praise what has been so unanimously admired. If the *Requiem* be somewhat lengthy, its beauty saves it from reproach. The few reminiscences of the method in which Mozart has treated the same verse, discernible in "*Rex tremendæ majestatis*," do not detract from its merit. As for the quartet, *Oro supplex*, it is one of the grandest movements in all sacred music. At the first hearing of *Mors et Vita*, in Paris, in the Hall of the Trocadero, when the great tenor, Mr. Edward Lloyd, who came from England for this solemnity, gave the first notes of his air,

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with the purity of sound and the accuracy of diction which render his singing of sacred music so remarkable, the whole of the large audience was thrilled. With Gabrielle Krauss, Madame Conneau, and Faure, the quartet was superb.

Shall I add—even at the risk of justifying the accusation of frivolity so mercilessly launched at the French, sometimes wrongly, but this time alas! too truthfully—that the Parisians were satisfied with *three* complete performances of this splendid work, given for the benefit of charitable associations, in May, 1886? What possessed Gounod to seek his subject in the Apocalypse? asked the public. Neither the symphonic piece of the *Judex*, where the violins give an echo of the introduction to *Faust*, or the soprano solo with chorus, "*Beati qui lavant*," of truly angelic sweetness, reconciled the audiences to the solemnity of the whole. The profoundly tender phrase depicting the felicity of the saints took a strong hold of the memory, the symbolic passage which, passing from the minor to the major, successively expresses woe and consolation, was understood and followed with interest in all its happy transformations; but the *Requiem* was felt to be too long. As for the third part, where the composer describes with all the wealth of his imagination the splendours of the Heavenly Jerusalem, "*Paratam sicut sposam ornatam viro suo*," the listeners were quite lost,

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they knew nothing about it! And this is the public for whom you would have a second Sebastian Bach born into the world!

It must be admitted that the conditions under which great religious compositions are executed in France are not favourable to those conceived on the lofty plan of *Mors et Vita*. In a Protestant country the people who come to hear an oratorio consider it like going to church, and are as devoutly attentive as when listening to a sermon; there is no talking, no coming in and going out, no applause, no *encores*. French public regards an oratorio as an opera. *Redemption* was given for the first time in a fashionable concert-room by *La Concordia*, a choral society of amateurs, founded by an amateur artist of great merit, Mme. Henriette Fuchs, and conducted by the excellent composer, Charles Marie Widor, one of the best masters of the modern French school. Gounod consented to lead the orchestra for that one night; the execution was good, and the enthusiasm immense. But what of the religious character of the work? *Redemption* did not suffer so severely, as may readily be understood, but *Mors et Vita* at a concert, in a drawing-room—yes, fragments of it have been performed in fashionable circles!—in a theatre, what a mistake, I may say, what a sacrilege!

From an artistic point of view it is absurd.

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Gounod feels this, and while he submits to his country's customs, he approves the etiquette adopted in Protestant countries for the execution of sacred music. To the uninitiated, the absence of noisy manifestations on the part of the public produces a certain chilling effect; nevertheless, the mute thrill, the indefinable tremor, the silent current of emotion, which reveal the vibration of the soul as surely as gesture or words, cannot be suppressed, and these tell the author that he has won his audience. All composers are not ambitious of applause; nothing vexes Gounod more, even at the theatre, than the loud plaudits that invariably drown the close of the "Garden Scene" in *Faust*, after Mephisto's strident laughter. "No one," he says, "has ever heard the last sixteen bars of the orchestra, expressing the absorption of the lovers, their amorous ecstasy; nobody has ever noticed the repetition in counterpoint of Marguerite's phrase at the balcony, while the kettle-drums strike with muffled sound on the anvil of Evil." The intelligent spectator, waiting patiently for the conclusion of the musical idea, would give Gounod far more pleasure than the enthusiasts who drown it under their ill-timed admiration.

Let us return to sacred music.

In France a Mass is the only form which exacts a rigid severity of style, and yet composers have

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rarely taken advantage of the facilities afforded by Roman Catholic worship to write really religious music. Without disregarding the merit of Rossini's *Messe Solennelle* or of his *Stabat Mater*, one cannot help being—while listening to them—reminded of *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*. Gounod himself is not absolutely free from reproach on this head. He is aware of the fact, and when the Archbishop of Rheims, his old schoolfellow at the School of the Carmelites, asked him to write a Mass in honour of Joan of Arc, to be sung in the Cathedral that witnessed the coronation of Charles VII., the Maestro resolved to resuscitate Palestrina, and to create one of the old Roman Masses, impersonal and mystical, that he so fervently admires. "When Christ entered Jerusalem," he says, developing his theories on sacred music, "and the people on His passage cried out, 'Hosannah! Son of David!' the disciples said unto Him, 'Master, bid them be silent,' but He answered, 'if men are silent, stones will speak'—*Lapides clamabunt*. Well, a choral Mass must symbolize these words; it must be an edifice in stone, austere, grave, massive, and solemn."

The attempt made to fulfil his own conditions is remarkable. Abandoning the resources of orchestration and the assistance of solos, as giving a dramatic flavour to the work, Gounod wrote the Mass of *Jeanne d'Arc* for choruses

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and organ alone, with purely psalmodic *soli* as "Palestrinian" in style as modern taste and the resources of French choirs, devoid of the special training and unacquainted with the jealously continued tradition of the Sistine Chapel would allow. Preceded by a prelude for the organ, eight trumpets, and three trombones, figuring the procession march of Charles VII., Joan of Arc, and their cortege entering the cathedral for the ceremony of the coronation, the Mass progresses with imposing majesty till it reaches the *Benedictus*.

Here Gounod wavers in his resolution. Till then, Faith, the Church, the Faithful, had spoken alone, but now the Musician can no longer remain silent, his soul lifts itself to God's throne. Gounod himself giving a commentary on the quartet in B flat, with accompaniment of organ and harps, in which his personality stands confessed, says, "When the Almighty descends on the altar in the consecration of the Host, the angels are present kneeling and adoring. Their presence is symbolized by harp-drops (*gouttes de harpes*) falling like celestial dew through the melody sang by the voices." The piece is very fine, and contrasts by its melodious sentiment with the artistic character of the preceding ones. "Beautiful effect," say those who are gladdened by this furtive ray of sunlight piercing the stained glass of the cathe-

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dral, and for one fugitive moment lighting up its sombre shadows. "Error of style," exclaim those who are shocked by any infraction of the laws that govern the whole work.

Another passage is viewed with disfavour by the latter, although it is not an integral part of the Mass, and has been published separately. It is a *cantilena* for the violin, sustained by the organ and harps, played at the offertory, a moment when the Mass proper is interrupted; it paints the ecstasy of Joan when she hears "her voices," whose divine accents mingle in her heart in ineffable harmony with the distant sounds of the evening *Angelus* sounding over the far-off, solitary fields. Then the tremor of the strings is hushed, man effaces himself, and the solemn voice of the immutable Church booms forth the *Agnus Dei* and the *Ite, Missa est.*

With this composition closes the study, not only of his sacred music, but of his whole work.[1] Some portions have been necessarily overlooked. I would fain have spoken of his symphonies, had I not feared to trespass on the reader's time and patience. After the first doubtful success of *Faust*, Gounod had been tempted to devote himself entirely to this style, so little cultivated nowadays, and for which his serious studies,

[1] M. Gounod has, since this was written, composed his fourth Solemn Mass, the Te Deum in honour of the Blessed J. B. Lassalle, and the Hymn of Our Lady of France, for voices and orchestra.

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his respect for the classical masters, his special aptitudes for the art of instrumentation, seem to have admirably fitted him. He did not persist in a decision born of fleeting discouragement, and the world was the gainer. Gounod is above all lyrical. The element of Love, dominant in his nature, finds a free outlet on the stage, and even in the church, when it is purified by religious feeling, and by his reverence for the sound traditions of sacred music; while symphony expressing mere abstract ideas requires special picturesque and descriptive faculties. The capacity of production is limited. Few artists have had a career so variously fertile as Gounod's; fewer still have on their glorious record so many grand, strong, graceful, and delightful compositions, and so few errors.

Not only is this survey of the master's work less complete than I should have wished to make it, but it is not final. He has not uttered his last word, and there are reasons to believe that he is maturing the plan of a great dramatic composition, on the tragic and touching history of Charlotte Corday, in spite of his latest assurance that he would never write another opera—"Lovers' vows, made to be broken!"

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Part VII.

THE MAN AND THE ARTIST.

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CHAPTER I.

About classification of artistic temperaments—Different forms of sensibility—The human soul a keyboard—Taste the moral of art—"Genius the sphere of equals."

THE various traits of Gounod's character revealed by the study of the artist, give a sufficiently clear insight into that of the man. It may be summed up in three words. He is all love, all serenity, all youth!

"Love," he exclaimed one day, in one of the effusive moments in which he opens his heart to sympathetic companions; "indeed, I am full of it, and that is why I have crammed so much into my operas."

As we have seen, he was even accused of having "crammed" some into his oratorios. Critics are right in noting this, wrong in condemning it. Other censors, even more severe, declare that having constituted himself the musician of Love, he only cultivated a secondary art, and sacrificed on the altars of false gods.

How unwise to classify artistic temperaments by the rule of reason only! Even as regards painting, the task offers serious and embarrassing

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difficulties. Undoubtedly, the frescoes of Michael Angelo and Raphael are of a higher order than the gallant pictures of Watteau, or the *natures mortes* of Chardin, and a higher place in Parnassus will be set apart for the painters who have devoted their brush to the decoration of the temple of God, than to those who have merely adorned a woman's boudoir. And yet a good *genre* picture is preferable to an inferior sacred one, for the first duty—I might say the sole duty—of painting, is to be good. In art, intention goes for nothing, the result is all, and the result is—form. What rank is to be assigned to portrait and landscape painters? Which is nobler, to reproduce the human face or the aspects of Nature? And what infinite variety in landscapes! The majestic ones of Poussin and Claude, with their fantastic architecture, do they correspond to a purer ideal than the *Buisson* of Ruysdael or *L'Allée de Middelharnis* of Hobbema? Do the portraits of a pope or a princess belong to a higher order than the effigy of an old Dutch peasant woman or of a Jewish rabbi? Rembrandt, however, is not put into the shade by Van Dyck. It is fruitless to disentangle this maze of conjectures, impossible to classify the distinctions. The interference of literature and philosophy in art questions only troubles and misleads minds and artists. The pen and the brush are not the same tools; let each do its own

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work, and leave the other alone, lest they should both fail in an effort for which they were not meant.

What is true in painting is far more true in music, for the aim of music is not to speak to our eyes but to rouse our emotions. Sensibility, which is the faculty of feeling, takes various shapes; laughter is one, and it requires but vulgar means to evoke it. But emotion may spring from many sources; tenderness and hatred, jealousy and adoration. To touch the heart, music must come from the heart; every human feeling is worthy of being expressed, if it is sincere, and each artist works upon those most akin to his own temperament. If religious, he celebrates divine love; if voluptuous, he sings of earthly passion; if descriptive, he reproduces the voices of Nature; if heroic, he touches the martial chord; the fanciful fascinates us by the visions of the marvellous, the robust rudely shakes our indifference, the gentle wraps us in caresses—all arouse emotion. It is invidious to ask which method is the best; this can be submitted to no fixed law, and why should we strive to define a classification dependent on personal tastes, requirements, and longings? The human soul is like a keyboard on which the artist strikes until he finds the responding chord; but a great soul does not give only a solitary answer to his hand. On the other side, the

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genius who should have the power to evoke a response from the entire keyboard would be superhuman. All the different artistic organizations must unite to play on that marvellous instrument, the soul, or, to continue using the musical metaphor, to bring into play the orchestra of human sensibility. All play their parts, and none should be missed so long as they contribute to the perfection of the whole.

It might be objected that just as the big drum does not occupy so important a place in an orchestra as a Stradivarius, certain styles of composition are of an inferior rank. Quite right; yet without absolutely proscribing the classification of different styles of art, it must not be carried too far. It asserts itself naturally, without fundamental rules. M. Planquette does not consider himself the equal of Handel, and those who prefer the *Cloches de Corneville* to the *Messiah* are no judges. The composers of *opérettes* earn money and amuse us. In so doing, they fulfil their only mission, and with it we do not quarrel.

On what step in the very extensive artistic hierarchy we should wish to see established, stands Auber, for instance? The graceful trifling of *Le Domino Noir* and the slight *badinage* of *L'Ambassadrice* have never stirred a soul. They divert the mind and pleasantly tickle the ear, a quality not to be despised, but are absolutely

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devoid of ideality. This is the only real difference between the various forms of musical art, between those which thrill us with emotion—any emotion, provided it be strong enough to lift us for a moment out of ourselves—and those which divert without absorbing us.

Let us cease to discuss the intention of an artist, and let us accept what he gives us. So long as he possesses the emotional faculty, what matters the source of his inspiration? And to censure him because he finds it here or there, according to his nature, is as unfair as to make him responsible for the colour of his hair and eyes. Moralists may consider a voluptuous temperament as being artistically of an inferior order, but God alone has the power and right to classify what He has given at each man's birth. They profess to believe that love—profane love—is a contemptible passion, a weakness of base human nature, and that it is sinful to excite it by external inducements. We do not attempt to shake their belief, but we maintain that morality is not a question of art.

It is well that Bach should have written *La Passion selon St. Mathieu*, and Beethoven his choral symphony; but it is not wrong for Mozart to have written the serenade of *Don Giovanni* and Gounod the duet of *l'Alouette*. The benediction of the daggers immortalizes Meyerbeer, but Rossini will live in the finale of *Il Barbiere*.

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All the great masterpieces united in a solid sheaf are the glory of humanity, and if great men have not always lived in perfect unison on earth, it is not for the envious to disturb the harmony reigning among their illustrious shades as they wander laurel-crowned in the eternal splendour of Apollo's realms. Victor Hugo has expressed our feeling in one line : " *Le génie est la sphère des égaux* " (" Genius is the sphere of equals").

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CHAPTER II.

Gounod the musician of Love—What he thinks of universal love in its varied forms—His personal affability.—His moral and artistic serenity—His youthfulness of body, heart, and mind.

GRANTED that Gounod is the musician of Love, let none blame him. Far from disowning the name, he openly claims it. Love is his essence, his *raison d'être;* he steeps himself in love, and breathes it with delight. "To-morrow," he said lately; "I shall be seventy. Well, I have never so fully understood the intensity of Love, which is *par excellence* the feeling of youth. If I were a painter, I know that I should make a thoroughly true portrait of Love, because I have the interior vision, the intuition of it, and that I am in constant, direct contact with Love."

No need, I trust, to explain that I use the word Love as he does, in its broadest and noblest sense. I am not relating the life of the man, but showing forth the temperament of the artist. Let him again speak for himself: "Love alone makes man. Friendship is but another form of the same feeling, called love in the passionate sense. Divine Love is the

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source of all love, and love of God and father-land, of mother and mistress, of art and one's neighbour, is but one and the same feeling. Neighbourly love is manifested by fraternity; the love of art by labour, of country by devotion; filial love by respect and tenderness; love of God by adoration. As for the other love, the one of which Cupid is the god, why do austere minds look upon it as sin and perdition? Is it not the spring of life, the generator of humanity, the essential condition of being and the continuation of races?"

It is Gounod who speaks, not I, and if I do not quote textually, at least I reproduce faithfully his thoughts and sentiments.

"When the Creator divided mankind into two sexes, *sections* that complete each other," says he, "He had His motives, which we have no right to discuss. If the love existing between two mortals of different sexes has its baser features, it is not our fault, for such we came from the hands of our Divine Maker. All we can and must do, is to purify love and make it ideal; to make the heart and mind assist in the work of the flesh. And indeed the only love worthy of the name is the love in which the three elements are combined." "If physical enjoyment," he continues, "be not supplemented by moral and intellectual satisfaction, it is merely a frivolous and fugitive pleasure."

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Understanding it thus, is the artist who sings of love to be considered inferior?

Friendship, "that other form of universal love," is not unknown to Gounod, but he imparts to it some indefinable quality which he borrows from love, and makes it warm and luminous. He said, talking of one of his best friends, the great painter Hébert, his comrade at the Academy of France in Rome, where they met nearly half a century ago, "We are like two lovers; nothing is wanting in our love, not even scenes, quarrels, and reconciliations." As affectionate as he is effusive, he liberally bestows his friendship in exchange for that which he inspires. The *enfants terribles* who break their toys to see what is inside, pretend that he acts on the same system as the cat, rubbing up against you in quest of an unconscious caress; sceptics declare that his expansion is delusively universal, and warn you to expect disappointment. Both may be right, for Gounod says, "I will be loved;" and he tries to please, or rather—if I may be allowed to confute his enemies with their own subtilties—he seeks nothing. He pleases naturally, because he has the gift of fascination, and the virtue of exercising it without effort or ostentation. Some come into the world repellant, and glory in their repelling powers; Gounod was born a *charmeur*, and his happiness lies in charming.

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The reproach of over-complacency is addressed to all amiable natures. Each of those who have been entranced by Gounod's graceful familiarity, his winning *bonhomie*, feels happier and better for it, but each would like to keep those treasures to himself. One day, when Gounod was complaining, as he often does, that he was submerged by the tide of society, somebody said to him, "Why do you not close your door against intruders?" "That is what they all tell me," he answered; "only that each of my advisers regards the others as intruders, and makes an exception of himself. What can I do?"

The inveterate selfishness of humanity prompts every one of his friends to monopolize the delightful company of the Maestro, and when unable to do so, to accuse him of over-complacency. Perhaps they are right, but he is so full of amiability, discreet politeness, caressing affability, and frank kindliness!—these are Gounod's characteristics, at the service of all, and too frequently taken advantage of. It has often been said that the last person he sees is the one he loves best. Even if this be not absolutely true—and it is not true—is it not a pleasant sensation to feel that for one short moment one has filled a privileged place in that heart? Why attempt to deny or resist the attraction? Far better yield to it, and enjoy it.

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Why quarrel with lovely music because it was not written for your ear alone?

The moral and artistic serenity of Gounod is the outcome of the perfect equilibrium of all his faculties. This assertion may cause some surprise to those who have fallen into the habit of looking upon him as a wild enthusiast, an "*emballé*," to use the detestable slang of the day. He certainly is enthusiastic; and may not a fire at which so many others have been lit, burn with its own flame? The grocer requires no enthusiasm to enable him to sell sugar and candles; accurate scales and decent book-keeping are all he wants; but to compose an opera more than fugue and counterpoint is needed. The artist is imaginative and sensitive, therefore at times exaggerated. But his serenity, if he is gifted with that delightful quality, cannot be disturbed by the interior agitation which is the source of his inspiration, or the outward effervescence which produces abrupt bursts of enthusiasm, sudden fits of depression, or vehement effusions of joy and anger. Gounod possesses this perfect serenity. He has known bitterness, deceptions, sorrow, but never doubt. He has faith as well in art as in morality and religion. He is certain of what he knows, and does not care for what he does not know, because he is sure of knowing it some day—that day when, as he says, "he shall behold the spring of all love, of all

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devotion, of all apostolates, when he shall be clothed in the garments of the beautiful, the true, and the good; when he will share in the last and universal communion."

In his faith he belongs neither to his time nor to his country, for he is untouched by the cruel evil of doubt, which so deeply taints the present generation in France, even more than elsewhere. A person who has not the same happiness, one day expressed to him that vague uneasiness of the unknown, the dread of the "beyond life" which is the torment of vacillating souls. He answered with a smile, after listening to this paraphrase of Hamlet's monologue, "But do not be so disturbed, we shall soon know it all. It is true that I can easily preach patience, because I am far nearer the hour than you are; but it will come, never fear. All will be explained, light will dawn on all things, and you will find that the unknown is not so appalling. *I* am certain of it."

The abiding youthfulness of Gounod, his moral youthfulness, I mean, is the fruit of this serenity, allied to a remarkable physical juvenility. He is fond of mentioning his age; a pardonable vanity, for his resonant voice, his boyish laughter, his spontaneous and communicative merriment, contradict the fact of his being beyond his seventieth year. He has youth to spare for our grim, morose, ænemic

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and nerve-sick generation, bearing from its birth the seal of moral pessimism ; and even if he gave enough to rejuvenate all around him, he would still remain the youngest among them. The scepticism of the day, unwholesome when it is sincere, sinful when it is affected, grieves and irritates Gounod. Humbug and pretence, the stupid and deteriorating *blague* which has corrupted society high and low, revolt him. His speech, which is very free, is full of tact ; his manners, which are easy and frank, show the refinement of a delicate nature ; he is patrician to his finger-tips—perhaps because great artists are the real princes. His whole attitude is a constant protest against the strange new fashions of talking and acting in the highest circles. Not that he is averse to jesting, on the contrary, or that he does not enjoy *badinage* and light conversation, even if flavoured with Gallic salt ; but he never oversteps the boundaries of good taste, and never forgets, as we are too apt to do nowadays, that to laugh at everything is to degrade and destroy all things. Nor does he disdain irony ; he can wield that weapon deftly, but it is tempered with a smile, and never does more than graze his victim.

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CHAPTER III.

Gounod's conversation—His religious faith—His absence of affectation and infatuation—What is the modesty of a great man—Can an artist see the faults of his work.

It may readily be supposed how delightful is the conversation of such a man. He has what makes a rare and admirable talker, a searching and subtle intellect developed by sound primary education, by the constant worship of the beautiful, and the teachings of an intense life; a generous and expansive nature ready to pour itself out; a natural eloquence assisted by the consciousness of being listened to with deference and interest, and the singular prestige of his appearance. His conversation is chiefly remarkable for the abundance and depth of observation, his flow of words seems inexhaustible, especially when his interlocutor knows how to keep the ball going. Gounod has nothing in common with those clever and witty people who do not *converse* but *talk*, who may be interesting, even amusing, but are wearisome from their egotistical eloquence. Of such, they say, were Lord Macaulay and Lord Brougham. But even when Gounod takes hold of a topic in

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which he is intensely interested, moral, artistic, or religious, he never preaches, he does not ascend the rostrum; he possesses to an uncommon degree the rare virtue of being a good listener. Whatever remark, objection, or doubt his companion suggests, he immediately takes up the scent, rushes on the track, and with apostolic ardour, tempered by the courteous amiability of a man of the world, sets to work to convince him. Partly from habits of politeness, partly from innate sincerity, he considers every argument worthy of refutation, every idea worthy of being examined.

No fear of his becoming wearisome on any subject; his vivid imagination is ever starting new topics, and his juvenile activity of mind passes from one to the other without the least effort. Those he prefers, are, we know, religious, or rather philosophical and moral dissertations, supported by curious commentaries on the Bible. Gounod has not forgotten the teachings of the Carmelite School, or disowned the beliefs of his youth. A profound theologian, a learned student of Holy Writ and of the Fathers of the Church, he could as readily write a sermon as an opera. The aim of his discussion on these matters is to obtain a perfect accordance between Reason and Faith. As regards himself, he has entirely succeeded, for in his mind there is no room for doubt, and his ingenious arguments,

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his vast erudition, his burning eloquence, his communicative warmth, carry conviction to his hearers so long as they remain under the spell of his presence.

Gounod is a sincere Christian, and profoundly attached to the Roman Creed, which he considers as the best form of Christianity; nevertheless his Catholicism is at times somewhat fanciful. As he says himself, in his quaint fashion: "If a good Catholic were to dissect me, he would be much surprised at what he would find inside." For him the letter is nought, the spirit all; therefore his religion is supremely enlightened, thoroughly liberal, and broadly tolerant even where doctrine is concerned. Numbers of people—who, to say the least, are guilty of talking of what they do not understand—describe Gounod as a devotee, a visionary passing from a rehearsal to the confessional, prostrating himself on the steps of the altar after having instilled into one of his interpreters the essence of profane love! I cannot tell whether this erroneous idea of the Maestro is current in England, but it is widely adopted in his own country, where the truth might so easily be ascertained about a man who reveals himself with such frank freedom.

In trying to dispel this erroneous impression, I do not however consider it injurious to Gounod's reputation. Even if his religion were such

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as it is supposed to be, it would be neither criminal nor ridiculous, but, unfortunately, in Francé it is the fashion to mock all sincere convictions, and especially religious belief; therefore, those who attribute to him devotional practices rarely performed by Catholic men, mention the fact with scornful irony. The more indulgent, taking the amusing paradox that "genius is neurosis," seriously think that, in a great musician who constitutionally suffers from nervous excitement, this slight infirmity is a harmless form of the pleasing madness to which we owe *Faust* and *Romeo*, *Redemption* and *Mors et Vita*. These practical and grave critics might as justly aim their sarcasm against imagination, that "*folle du logis*" which has found grace in their eyes, because to it they owe the masterpieces that have charmed their leisure.

Men of genius are the indispensable ornaments of a refined society, and some eccentricities or peculiarities must be allowed them. "Richter says that in the island of Sumatra there is a kind of light-chafers, large fire-flies, which people stick upon spits to illuminate the roads at night. Persons of condition can thus travel with a pleasant radiance which they much admire." (Carlyle's "Hero Worship," chap. v.)

A few words more concerning the man. I have often heard people who did not know Gounod, or did not understand him, accuse him

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of affectation and infatuation. I must indeed have sadly failed in depicting his nature if there be still any need to refute the first of these charges, as nothing could be more foreign to his character than the vulgar "*pose*" described as affectation, which is utterly opposed to the familiarity, the ease, and the simplicity of his temper and manners. Men as great as he is are above a weakness which is the dust thrown by mediocrity into the eyes of the ignorant; they have the grandeur and the prestige that assert themselves authoritatively.

As for the unconscious affectation residing in certain forms of metaphor and lyrical speech in which Gounod indulges, they are the natural outcome of his wealth of thought and expression. But with him plain-spoken sincerity soon asserts itself; he is so *genuine*, that the fleeting colours of a fanciful light seem only to cast a hidden radiance on his conversation, and impart to it a subtle charm. A man who knows him well and loves him greatly, said to me one day, speaking of one of his lectures at the Institute: "That demon of a man is astounding. If you had read in a pamphlet what you have just listened to, you would not have understood much of it. When he *says* it himself in an Academic *séance* or in familiar conversation it is as clear as spring water." This is perfectly true;

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Gounod's language is as luminous as his music.

As regards his vanity the same answer might serve, in the sense that nothing in his frank cordiality reveals its external presence, and nothing more can reasonably be expected of a celebrity; for it is absurd to demand that he should ignore himself. Success and honours, homage and admiration, fame and fortune, have in no degree changed the "*bon enfant*" simplicity of Gounod's nature. He naïvely likes to be praised. "Music is a woman," says Wagner, and musicians have a feminine love of appreciation. Besides, what father has ever been blamed for the satisfaction he experiences when his children are admired? Does the child of his spirit hold a lesser place in a man's heart than the child of his flesh?

But Gounod dislikes vulgar compliments and despises flattery. He often does talk about himself, assuredly, but as he is constantly induced to do so by his hearers, it is unjust to make this a reproach, especially taking into consideration that all he says is interesting, whether he dips into the memories of his long and brilliant career, or reveals the secret of his thoughts, or exposes the mainsprings of his work. He has never uttered a word of pride or arrogant vanity, and surely he cannot set himself in opposition to the whole world by

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denying the merits of the offspring of his genius. How can he forget that he is the author of *Faust*, dismiss the vision of *Romeo?* And even if he repudiated his operas, he would be confronted by his oratorios. The consciousness of his own worth does not blind him to the merits of others, and in what else does the modesty of a great man consist?

It is chimerical to expect the artist to recognize the defects of his work, not because he is blinded by conceit, but, by taking a painter's labours as a simile, the phenomenon which renders the artist hostile to criticism is more easily accounted for. The painter conceives with his brain, and executes with his hand, assisted by the eye. If imperfection arises from the conception, can he reasonably be made to see it? A temperament, artistic or otherwise, cannot be re-created. If the mistake lies in an error of the eye, the result is the same, for a visual organ cannot be modified; and finally, if it is an awkwardness of his hand, he will remain unconvinced. His eye sees the picture as his brain has conceived it, and not in the form shaped by his hand—a singular working of the mind resulting from complete absorption in his subject; he is no longer the master of his work, it is his work which has taken possession of him.

What is true of the painter is equally true of the musician, with this difference, that in the

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latter the part of the eye is played by the ear. I do not pretend to say that a composer is entirely unconscious of certain weaknesses, certain slight backslidings, which must befall the greatest artists, especially in lyrical drama, where the best written poem has gaps which the musician must fill with what is not inaptly called "padding." He is also aware of the technical progress he has made in the constant practice of his art, and repudiates youthful errors. But when once his talent is matured, the discussion of his intentions and execution is interesting only to the outer world; criticism fails to touch him; it influences neither his qualities nor his defects, which are the very essence of his nature.

Gounod stands exonerated from the reproach of vanity, which, like affectation, belongs to the weak and the young. Age and talent restore equilibrium, and vanity is superseded by a legitimate pride. He one day compared the progress of modesty in his soul with the simultaneous whitening of his hair. "When I was very young I used to say '*I*,' later on I said '*I and Mozart*,' then '*Mozart and I*.' Now I say '*Mozart!*'" Let him, if he chooses, lower his flag before the author of *Don Giovanni*, but he remains the author of *Faust*. The Maestro has reversed the haughty words of Mirabeau: "Humble when I consider myself, proud when I compare myself with others." Gounod says the contrary, but the

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whole question lies in the object of comparison. When he measures himself with Mozart we may allow him to be humble, but he has the right to be proud if it be with . . . Let the reader put in the name—it is legion.

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CHAPTER IV.

Gounod's views on music and musicians—His reverence for Mozart—What he thinks of Bach, Weber, Palestrina—Of Gluck, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Berlioz, Bizet—The burning question of Wagner—How Gounod understands art—His ironical catechism of modern music—Conclusion.

THE above considerations lead us naturally to examine the judgments passed by Gounod on the masters of his art; an easy task as regards the dead, but he is very reticent with respect to the living, and wisely so. Neither his position nor his high character would protect him against the accusation of jealousy, so freely brought by those who measure every soul by the meanness of their own. There undoubtedly are jealous and envious artists, but by a singular coincidence, their inferiority is generally proportionate to their jealousy and envy. I know that Berlioz was not superior to this weakness, although he was a man of great talent, but he had been unfortunate, unappreciated by his contemporaries, and a series of slights and disappointments had soured a temper naturally unamiable. This never was the case with Gounod; had he not been gentleness itself, Fortune's smiles would have made him

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indulgent. Nevertheless, he shrinks from exposing himself to the perfidious insinuation of resembling the cavillers who glory in depreciating all greatness. "What have I done that you should spit at me?" said the glow-worm to the toad. "You shine," answered the toad. The apologue is ever new.

But the illustrious musician is not reticent in his opinion of the masters who are no more. It is hardly necessary to mention the name which he adores. This word is not too strong to render his worship of the musician whose profound technical science is allied to exquisite elegance of form, who has excelled in every manifestation of human feeling, to whom comedy is as familiar as tragedy, whose masterpiece is, says Gounod, "the most brilliant star that has ever shone in the musical firmament." That name is Mozart. In a lecture at the annual sitting of the Academy of Fine Arts, Gounod has avowed his admiration, and sounded the praises of his idol in the following high-sounding terms, which yet inadequately render the intensity of his feelings :—

"Who has run through the great gamut of human passions as he has done? Who has reached the extreme limits of the scale with the same infallible precision, equally guarded against the false refinement of artificial elegance and the roughness of spurious force? Who has better known how to breathe anguish and dread into the purest and

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most exquisite forms? Oh, divine Mozart! hast thou reposed on the bosom of infinite Beauty as the beloved disciple rested on the breast of Christ, and drank in the incomparable grace which marks the great and privileged few? Prodigal fortune has given thee all, elegance and strength, abundance and moderation, luminous spontaneity and ardent tenderness, in the perfect equilibrium which constitutes the irresistible power to charm, and has made of thee the unexcelled musician—more than the first—the only one—Mozart!"

We know likewise what he thinks of Johann Sebastian Bach and also of Palestrina, the austere guide of his youth, his chosen master during his first period of musical production. We have not forgotten his judgment on Weber and the high esteem in which he held the genius to which he owes his first musical revelation. I must, however, record here his appreciation of the fantastical element in *Der Freischütz* which is so just and yet so picturesque. "It is music one would not like to meet at night." Of Schumann and Mendelssohn enough has already been said; I need not revert to them.

Gounod looks upon Beethoven as the most epic, philosophical, and apostolic of composers. In his opinion the pastoral symphony is a profession of pantheistic faith, the symphony with chorus is the musical Gospel of Socialism. The

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Michael Angelo of music, Beethoven, of all the masters takes the greatest flight; not that he rises higher, but that in his course he covers a broader sphere, and throws the shadow of his wings over a vaster space.

Gluck is the most tragic. He is the Greek son of Æschylus and Sophocles; he was born clad in the peplum and shod with the buskins. His work resembles antique statuary, with its chaste and rich draperies, its noble and pure lines; his is the great art lifted to a constantly sustained pathetic height.

After the limpidity of Mozart, the breadth and elevation of an opera like *Don Giovanni*, Rossini is in Gounod's estimation the most limpid, broad, and lofty of lyric authors. He allies an infinite variety of accents with fertility of imagination, and his work is summed up in two masterpieces of strangely opposite character, *Il Barbiere di Seviglia* and *Wilhelm Tell.*

Gounod considers Meyerbeer as a master, but not a genius. His musical stock, the clay he moulds, is of secondary quality, and in his field the tares grow with the wheat. His inspiration is often luminous, but never absolutely pure, and may be compared to those large diamonds whose quality is not of the finest water.

His judgment of Berlioz is curious and specially interesting because the author of *La Damnation de Faust*, in 1859, as musical critic of the *Journal des Débats*, had to criticize the

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composer who had so suddenly risen into fame. In justice to Berlioz, let it be said that he showed himself an enlightened and impartial critic as regards *Faust;* the constitutional acrimony of the man yielded to artistic conscientiousness. However, amidst the most liberally awarded praise, two unexpected instances of censure appear. He blames Gounod for a "too vehement" instrumentation and an excessive tension of the voices in the choruses as well as of the violins, "which scream too constantly in *alto*." Referring to the prison scene, he again declares that the music "is too terse, too painful, too pyschologically mournful," a singular charge to be made by a musician who is so consistently vehement, not to say rough.

Gounod looks upon Berlioz as an ill-balanced temperament. "He is fantastical," he says, "and emotional; he suffers, he weeps, he grows desperate, or loses his head. The personal side of things seizes hold of him. He has been called the 'Jupiter of music.' Granted, but a Jupiter who stumbles, a god who is a slave to his passions and his transports. But withal, possessing masterly qualities, a marvellous colourist, he handles orchestration—which is the musician's palette—with a sure and powerful grasp. And then we come suddenly, among remarkable passages, upon mistakes, awkward bits, betraying a tardy and faulty technical education—in short, an incomplete genius."

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George Bizet, a distinguished artist, too early lost to France by an untimely death, was described by Gounod as a "charming" musician, whose music, intelligent to a high degree, intellectual, profoundly subtle, and delightfully refined, envelops the drama, clothes it and fits it with marvellous power of adaptation. Two temperaments so utterly dissimilar as those of the authors of *Faust* and *Carmen*, can have hardly any other likeness than their respective talent; on one point, however, they met. *Carmen*, like *Faust*, had but a half success on the first night, and even then it was so disputed that the opera nearly proved a failure. The only one among the audience who understood this exquisite score, who defended it against the dislike or indifference of the public, was Gounod. To those who scoffed and railed in the passages and wings, voting the music as obscure and eccentric as the poem was odious and immoral, he answered with the profoundly convinced accent that has so often silenced the most incredulous: "But do listen to the music, it is lovely in colouring and excellent in workmanship. It is impossible that some day it should not triumph; you will all change your minds." *Carmen* did triumph—abroad—like *Faust*, of which Berlioz had said fifteen years before, "It might be the success of to-morrow," which proves two things—truisms both—that no man is a prophet in his own country, and

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that, after all, artists are the best judges of art.

In this review of the most important personalities of musical history, the reader will say that an artist is lacking whose name constantly rises to the lips, and Gounod's opinion of whom it would be particularly interesting to know. But, although Wagner is dead, the French Maestro is very reserved when he mentions the high priest of German music. "I know what I think, but I would rather not say it," is his answer when the conversation turns on this vexed tropic. The Wagnerian question is a difficult one to treat with composure, for it has created the most burning artistic passions, and has even been mixed up in France with questions of patriotic prejudice, to which it is absolutely foreign. His disciples regard the raising of a finger against the merits of the Master of Bayreuth as a crime as great as blaspheming God, and this fervour of devotion would in itself be almost a sufficient title to fame. The words pronounced by Gounod on the tomb of Henri Reber, a musician whose reputation was not equal to his merit, might be quite as aptly applied to Wagner: "He had a church, because he had a religion."

The frenzy of disparagement of those who do not like Wagner, possibly from ignorance, is as intense as the enthusiasm of his worshippers; and few are they who, without fanaticism and with-

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out dislike, mete out censure and blame impartially; fewer still those who abstain from discussing what they do not understand, for as M. St. Saëns wittily remarked, "Music being an *art d'agrément*, every one treats himself to the pleasure of talking about it."

By abstaining from discussing Wagner, Gounod shields himself from the attacks of both parties. He was once tempted to write a paper on this burning subject, and even went so far as to make a beginning, but he thought better of it, and buried the scrap of manuscript in a drawer of his desk, refusing to have it alluded to. It may some day be found, but for the present, whenever patient pertinacity succeeds in eliciting any remark about his illustrious colleague—for two such absolutely different Masters cannot be called rivals—this is what Gounod says: "Wagner is a marvellous monster, a visionary haunted by the colossal; he has not the stature of his brain qualities. Lacking measure and proportion, he oversteps the boundaries of human attention, and when confronted by the result of such prodigious efforts, such gigantic labours, so formidable an expenditure of talent and pains, we feel tempted to repeat the cruel words of *Agnès* to the impassioned *Arnolphe*:—

"*Horace avec deux mots en ferait plus que vous.*"
(Molière, *École des Femmes.*)

"The real stamp of genius," he adds, "is

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sobriety of means, in proportion to the wealth of idea. Compare the abuse of sonorities in Wagner, his harmonic orgies, with the simple handling of the scene of the Commander. When the Emperor Joseph II. said to the author of *Don Giovanni*, 'Your opera is very pretty, Herr Mozart, but it seems to me it contains a great number of notes,' the author was justified in his proud answer: 'Not one too many, Sire.'"

If Gounod does not care to give the public his opinion of Wagner, he is more communicative about what is now called "the modern school," a meaningless expression, repeated by a number of people without having any precise significance attached to it. This is how he judges it:—

"Art is happiness, but the tortured music of to-day, under pretence of being modern, gives me none. It is not a fountain flowing free and clear, it is not grace and beauty, it is not love. Those new musicians have talent, enormous talent, any amount of talent if you like, but they have never knelt before anything, neither before plastic beauty nor eternal love, neither before the Masters, nor before God. They do not procreate because, not having been *sons*, they cannot be *fathers*." If some new work, called "interesting," is mentioned before him, he exclaims: "Ah, heaven preserve us from interesting music; music must be fine—that is quite enough." And he adds "After all I may

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be wrong—and a laggard, but at any rate my music is *mine*, it is my flesh, my blood, my bones, and if it is liked, it is because it is true, sincere, living; if it is wanting in other qualities, those cannot be denied, and that is something. Remember what Veuillot, the great Catholic writer, said of Alfred de Musset: 'At least he has wept!'"

I shall also quote what Gounod has written in the preface of the eleventh volume of *Annales du Théâtre et de la Musique*, Charpentier, 1885. Paris.

"Must immobile uniformity be made into a dogma of art? Assuredly not, for nothing is more varied than truth, and, I may add, that truth alone can be so varied, for the excellent reason that spontaneity never copies itself or others, and that it bears an inner and incessant force incessantly renewed. Conventionality and prejudice alone are uniform and monotonous. It is easy to ascertain this by observing the modern musical movement during the last fifteen years in our country. Nearly all the musicians who represent it possess a prodigious cleverness—I might almost say prestidigitation, compared to that of musicians belonging to the former generation. But where does it lead them? They claim to free us from formulas, and they do not see the considerable amount of those they substitute for the old ones, formulas whose heavy vacuity is

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already exploded. Ah! what a curious catechism might be written on all the inanities which are supposed to become the code of future musical art. I fancy it would run thus:—

"*Q.* What is musical art?

"*A.* The art of combining sounds so as to make them painful to the ear and wearisome to the mind.

"*Q.* Why painful to the ear?

"*A.* Because music pleasantly caressing the ear tends to develop the sensual to the detriment of the intellectual nature, and that the sanctity of art forbids it to become the accomplice of this corruption.

"*Q.* Why do you add, wearisome to the ear?

"*A.* Because it is the means of stimulating and developing intellectual energy, and of lifting the spirit to that transcendency which is the rational summit of art, inaccessible to the vulgar masses.

"*Q.* Have not the great masters till now professed a different creed?

"*A.* Yes; because they were grovelling in the shadows that surrounded the cradle of art. But the darkness is lifting, thanks to the conquests of modern æsthetics, and we now practise music as Sganarelle practised medicine, 'on a brand new method.'

"*Q.* Therefore art should be a form of mortification?

"*A.* Precisely.

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"*Q.* Why?

"*A.* Because the character and duty of every superior musician is to fight against the relaxation of nature by the exercise of virtue, notably of patience under trials.

"*Q.* What is the essential condition of genius?

"*A.* The absence of ideas.

"*Q.* What do you mean by that?

"*A.* That genius being the creative faculty, its distinctive character should be its resemblance to the Creator, who has made all things out of nought."

And so on through all the stages of absurdity.

Then abandoning the tone of irony, Gounod continues:—

"One is eternally speaking of the progress of art. The expression is unmeaning. The artist may progress in his art, but art itself does not. Art is not like science, whose domain ranges over the successive and accumulated discovery of the laws of nature. Art rests on two elements ever and always the same, an instinct or sensibility whence proceeds emotion and expression, and a technical knowledge susceptible of growth, and therefore variable, but in the *individual*, not the *art*. This is why the same period may offer a gathering of great masters, very different from each other without being superior to each other."

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Reverting to his eternal Gospel of the Beautiful, he asks :—

"Are not all the conditions of art united in *Don Giovanni?* Is it ancient or modern art? Does it not contain with the exquisite and incomparable charm of pure music, the truest, most complete and constant expression of living truth, of human truth, and consequently all the psychological force that can be required of a drama?"

But if Gounod is pitiless to the empty pretensions of the numerous impotents who strive to make dogmatic systems and an arrogant attitude take the place of the ideas they have not got, he does full justice to the merits of his contemporaries and younger colleagues. He denies the so-called modern art, but not the modern artists. I am telling nothing new in stating the high esteem in which he holds M. St. Saëns' talent; as to the beginners who have hardly left school, he follows them with a lively interest, and is prodigal of his counsel and encouragement. But the advice he invariably gives them is, "Listen to your heart, govern it by your reason, and do not trouble yourself about hampering systems. Inspiration and counterpoint is all the needful baggage of a musician." He has acted on these principles all his life, and what greater inducement can there be than to follow the trail of his success?

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Having reached the end of this study, which had to be long because the subject was so important, my aim will be attained if I have shown how lovable is the man, how great the artist. Both are equally sympathetic and interesting. I do not think that a single dissentient voice will be raised when I say that Gounod is a genius who gains by being intimately known. No higher praise can be awarded to any human being.

THE END.

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